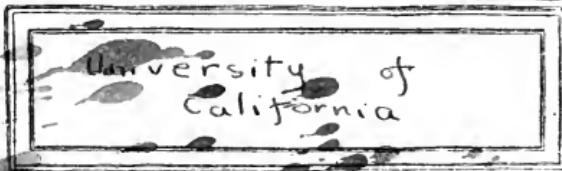
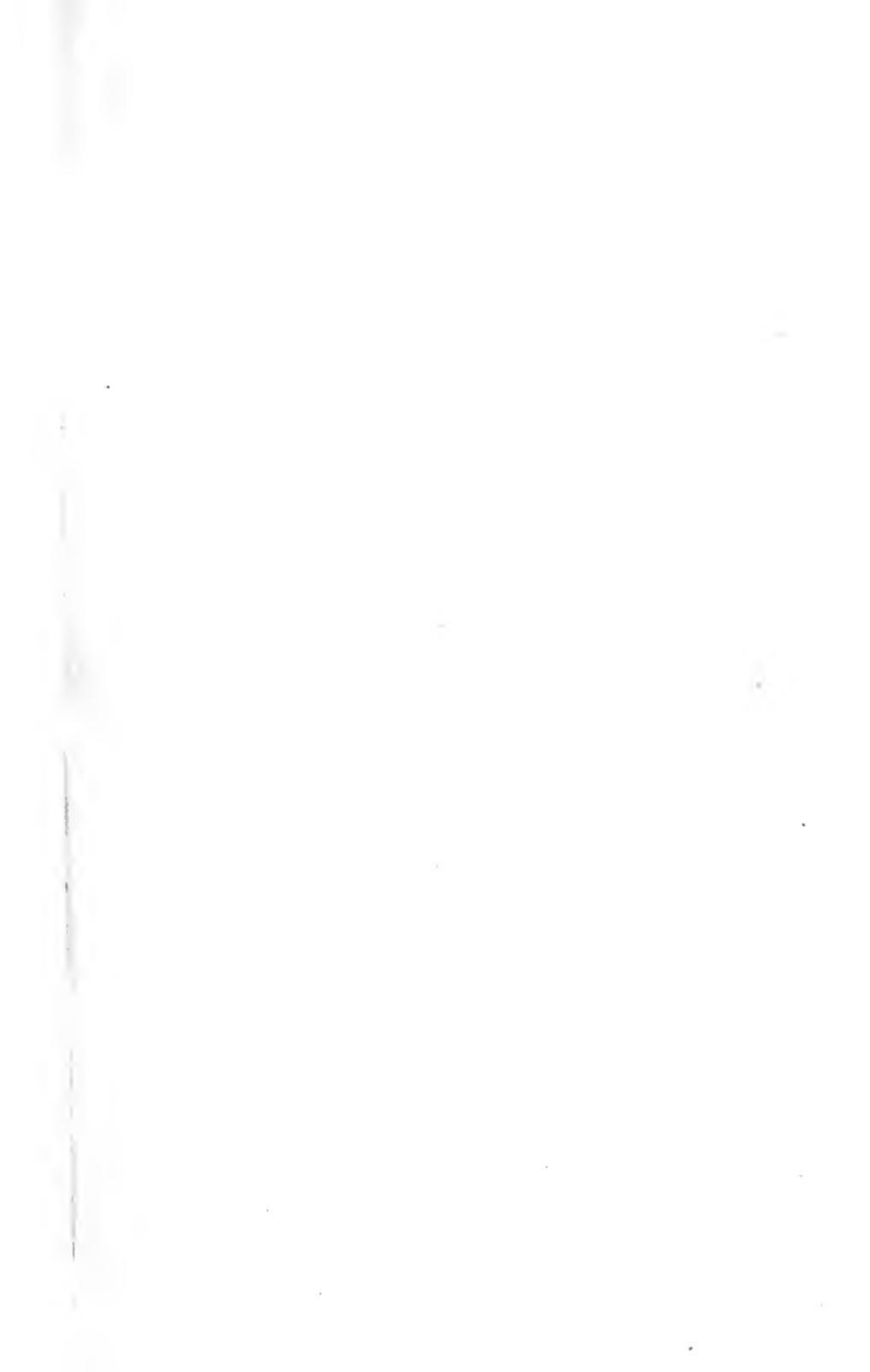


THE TRAGEDY OF MARY STUART

HENRY C. SHELLEY





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MARIE STUART.

AFTER A PORTRAIT BY H. GLEVEDON.

THE TRAGEDY OF MARY STUART

BY

HENRY C. SHELLEY

AUTHOR OF "LITERARY BY-PATHS IN OLD ENGLAND," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

"I fear this (the murder of Darnley) to be the beginning of the first act of the tragedy."—THE ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW TO MARY STUART



LONDON AND NEW YORK
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PREFACE

MARY STUART's span of life was restricted to forty-four years and two months. But of that period fifteen months sufficed for all those events which were to make her the most perennially fascinating figure in British history. The murder of Darnley, the marriage with Bothwell, the imprisonment in Lochleven, and the defeat at Langside, all transpired within the space of a year and a quarter.

Hitherto that fact has been ignored. In other words, the numerous biographies of the Scottish Queen have amplified details at the expense of proportion, with the result that the modern reader has to wade through countless pages to get at the heart of the matter. Hence the plan adopted in the present volume. By Prologue and Epilogue the essential events which preceded and followed the tragic period are passed in review, thus rounding out the biography; but the bulk of the book is devoted to a full account of those swiftly-occurring incidents which are the cause why Mary Stuart must always retain her pre-eminence among royal ladies.

And in another respect the present volume differs

from its predecessors: it is not an argument for or against the Queen of Scots. The author is not a partisan; he has striven to be a chronicler, setting down events as one might have done who had access to all the documents which were being penned during those fateful fifteen months. For the ensuing pages have been written from original and contemporary documents, many now utilized as biographical data for the first time.

One other remark may be added. Nearly twenty years have elapsed since the author began to visit the scenes associated with the vital months of Mary Stuart's life, and to accumulate his notes on the events of that period. If, then, the reader observes an unusual absence of argumentative footnotes and references to old records—the stereotyped equipment of volumes dealing with the Scottish Queen—he must not conclude that the author has ignored the literature of his subject; he has read far and wide for nearly two decades, but in the end he has fallen back upon original sources for the following attempt to set forth the Tragedy of Mary Stuart.

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TRAGEDY OF MARY STUART

PROLOGUE

I

ONE sombre December day in 1542, James V. of Scotland lay on a couch in the palace of Falkland awaiting life and death. He knew his own hours were numbered. To a servant who, a few days earlier, had questioned where his Sovereign desired to spend the Christmastide now rapidly approaching, he answered :

“I cannot tell; choose you the place. But this I can tell you: before Yule Day ye will be masterless, and the realm without a King.”

Solway Moss, where a few hundred yeomen of the English Border had scattered a host of ten thousand Scots, had broken his heart. Although he had not completed his thirty-first year, his spirit was crushed; for himself nothing was left save death.

But the despairing monarch also awaited life. Though his two baby sons were dead a year and more, his consort, Mary of Guise, thirty miles away in the palace of Linlithgow, was in labour for the

third time. Anxiously the dying King listened for the news of his wife's travail. It came at last: the Queen was safely delivered; but to the question as to the child's sex the messenger could only reply, "It is a fair daughter." That was the last stroke.

"The devil go with it!" ejaculated the disappointed King. "It will end as it began; it came with a lass, and it will end in a lass."

Thus, ere the first day of life had passed over her head, Mary Stuart was greeted with something like a curse, and that curse was uttered by the lips of her dying father!

Over the body of that baby Queen monarchs and statesmen quickly began that strife which ceased only with her death. Henry VIII. of England sought the infant in marriage with his son Edward; the Earl of Arran plotted to gain her for his own heir; but the Guise party at the Scottish Court triumphantly achieved their scheme for betrothing her to the Dauphin of France. As it proved, neither of these suitors had advantage over the other: Francis of France and Edward of England both proved weaklings, the one dying in his seventeenth and the other in his sixteenth year, and the Earl of Arran became a lunatic.

While Mary Stuart's months were yet few, those who wished the child had never been born reported she was not like to live. "But you shall see," exclaimed her mother to Sir Ralph Sadler, the English Ambassador, "whether they say true or not." So saying, Mary of Guise led Sadler to the child's room, where, as he wrote his royal master,

“she caused the nurse to unwrap her out of her clothes that I might see her naked. I assure your Majesty that it is as goodly a child as I have ever seen of her age, and as like to live, with the grace of God.” The baby Queen of Scotland was little more than three months old when Sadler pronounced that eulogy, but when he beheld her once more five months later, he saw no reason to qualify his praise. Years after he was to have charge of that “goodly child” as a prisoner, and take part in the trial which sent her to the scaffold.

In Stirling Castle, with its proud outlook over the carse of Stirling, and in the Priory of Inchmahone, embedded in the waters of the lovely Lake of Monteith, Mary spent the early years of a happy childhood. For the hours of learning she had competent instructors; for the hours of play the companionship of her four Marys. And so the years glided along, bringing at last that August day of 1548 when she sailed away from the stern and barren North to the smiling land of fair France.

Thirteen years were to be spent in that new home. Her welcome was auspicious: in every town along the route to the Court of France the prison doors were flung open in honour of the young Queen of Scotland. As the betrothed of the Dauphin she was educated among the royal children, learning French, Spanish, Italian, and Latin, and adding thereto the accomplishments of singing, playing on the harp and lute, dancing, riding, and the working of tapestry. But there

was another influence working its will during those impressionable years. "The cloistral precinct which sheltered her girlhood from such knowledge of evil as might in after-days have been some protection to her guileless levity was"—so runs the indictment of Swinburne—"the circuit of a Court whose pursuits and recreations were divided between the alcoves of Sodom and the playground of Aceldama. What were the vices of the society described by Brantôme it is impossible, or at least it would be repulsive, to suggest by so much as a hint; but its virtues were homicide and adultery. Knox or Ascham would have given plainer and juster expression, in shorter terms of speech more purely English, to the fact that no man was honoured who could not show blood on his hands, and no woman admired who would not boast as loudly of the favours she had granted as her gallants of the favours they had received. It is but a slight matter to add that the girl who was reared from her infancy in this atmosphere—in the atmosphere of a Court which it would be flattery to call a brothel or a slaughter-house—had for her mother a woman of the blood-stained house of Guise, and for her father the gaberlunzie-man or jolly beggar of numberless and nameless traditional adventures in promiscuous erotic intrigue."

That Mary Stuart succumbed in some measure to the shameless duplicity of her environment is proved by the secret agreements she made on the eve of her marriage—agreements which bartered away her kingdom of Scotland and disavowed in advance any

rescinding statute which her lords might adopt. Already the passion for high stakes had seized her, and she was willing to make any sacrifice to achieve her ambitions. Not that there was any reluctance on the part of the Dauphin to take the Scottish Queen as his bride ; on the contrary, Francis appears to have been fully conscious of Mary's sensual charms, and almost indecently anxious to make her his wife. So the nuptials were hastened forward, and on the last Sunday in the April of 1558 the heir and heiress of the French and Scottish thrones were made husband and wife beneath the fretted vaults of Notre Dame. The festivities of the day reached their climax in a resplendent banquet, but long ere the feast was concluded the youthful bride became oppressed by the weight of her crown, and was compelled to lay it aside.

Fourteen months later Mary Stuart became Queen of France. At the tournament where Henry II. received his fatal wound—thus opening the way for the accession of Francis II.—Mary was escorted to her seat with the cry of, "Place, place for the Queen of England!" That shout fell on grateful ears. Perhaps it prompted the thought which led her to embroider with her own hands the design of two interblended crowns and the motto, "A third awaits me." When rebuked by Elizabeth for quartering the royal arms of England with those of France and Scotland, her plea was that she had been "commanded" thereto by her father-in-law and husband ; but in view of her persistent claim to be acknowledged as next in succession to Elizabeth, she

probably needed little compulsion. It was because the Treaty of Leith included a clause pledging the King and Queen of France to abandon the arms of England that Mary refused to sign that treaty until her situation was so hopeless that she was ready to make any sacrifice to secure Elizabeth's goodwill.

For nearly a year and a half fortune smiled upon Mary Stuart. She was Queen of two kingdoms. Scotland, it is true, was a turbulent realm, divided into hostile camps of Catholicism and Protestantism, and lagging sadly behind in culture and the arts of life; France, however, was a power in Europe, a land of gaiety and knowledge, to be Queen of which was no mean prize in the lottery of life. But her hold on that prize depended upon a brittle thread. Than herself no one at the Court could have been more conscious that Francis II. was doomed to an early death; she would not have been surprised could she have looked over the shoulder of the Venetian Ambassador and seen him write, late in the November of 1560: "His Majesty's constitution is said to be defective, and an astrological prediction is quoted that his life will not exceed eighteen years." That was an unerring prophecy; in less than a month Francis, yet in his seventeenth year, lay dead at Orleans, and Mary Stuart, still a girl not eighteen, was a widow.

Despoiled of the crown of France, and dubious whether she might yet recover that of Scotland, she spent the early days of her mourning in "brooding over her disasters with constant tears and passionate

and doleful lamentations." Still, even in those days of apparently irreparable catastrophe, as so often in subsequent years, Mary Stuart manifested a surprising power of recuperation. In France her sovereignty was at an end, buried in her husband's tomb; in Scotland, albeit a land of rude manners and turbulent people, she would be a Queen in her own right once more. To the south, too, lay the fairer and richer kingdom of England—that England of which she had claimed to be Queen, and which she might yet wrest from the rule of Elizabeth. True, Scotland and England had alike thrown off the yoke of Rome, but might it not fall to her lot to reclaim both countries for her own faith and the allegiance of the Pope? That such thoughts were uppermost in her mind is obvious from her frank confession to the English Ambassador.

"I will be plain with you," she said, "and tell you what I would all the world should think of me. The religion that I profess I take to be most acceptable to God, and, indeed, neither do I know, nor desire to know, any other. Constancy doth become most folks well, but none better than princes and such as hath rule over realms, and especially in the matter of religion."

Inspired by the visions which such a programme may well have suggested, and convinced that whatever fate might await her in Scotland she would be nothing more than a cipher in France, Mary began preparations for returning to her northern kingdom.

Part of her plan, however, was foiled by Elizabeth.

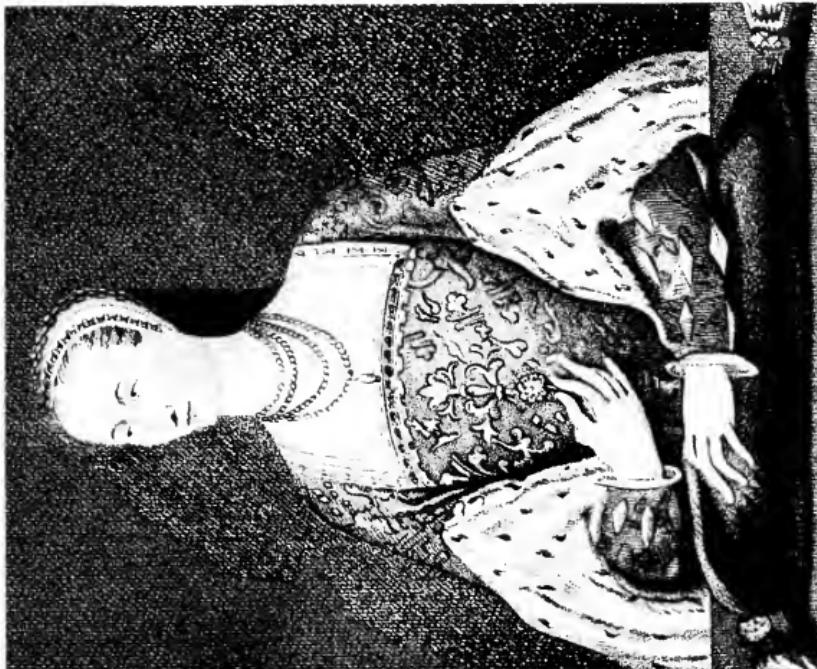
Aware of the Catholic bias of many of the English nobles, and anxious to make their acquaintance and bring them under that spell which few men could resist, the Scottish Queen, counting upon a regal progress through Elizabeth's domains, dispatched an emissary over the Channel for the necessary passports. She requested a special document for herself, giving her liberty to land in any part of England, to tarry where she pleased, to leave her ships in any convenient harbour, and to conclude her journey to Scotland by land if she felt so inclined ; and another passport for her retinue and a hundred hackneys, mules, carriage and cart horses, grooms, etc. But Elizabeth was not disposed to facilitate her cousin's schemes. Avoiding a down-right refusal of the passports, she adopted the equally effective policy of answering that if Mary would ratify the Treaty of Leith she would gratify any "reasonable request" for passing through her realm, and even arrange for a friendly meeting with the traveller.

Not yet, however, was Mary Stuart reduced to such an extremity as would prompt her to sign away her claim on the English throne—that was to come years later ; and for the rest, anxious though she was to see Elizabeth and compete with her in a womanly rivalry of beauty and queenly deportment, the price for the gratification of that ambition was too high.

Thwarted of her desire to make a progress through England, the Scottish Queen nevertheless adhered to her resolve to return to her native land.



JAMES V.



MARY OF GUISE.

“If my preparations were not so much advanced as they are,” she told Elizabeth’s Ambassador, “per-adventure your mistress’s unkindness might stay my voyage; but now I am determined to adventure the matter, whatsoever come of it. I trust,” she added, “the wind will be so favourable as I shall not need to come on the coast of England.”

But her frankness did not extend to a disclosure of the date of her sailing. That was a secret which Mary carefully kept to herself. Or, rather, to be exact, the date she did actually name in her letters to Scotland was not the one she intended to observe. She even fooled the shrewd Maitland of Lethington; what she meant by sending a message to Edinburgh with the definite intimation that she would arrive before such-and-such a day passed his “dull capacity” to imagine.

Would Elizabeth try to intercept her on the high seas? Resourceful as the English Queen was in inventing reasons for any action on which she had set her mind, it is puzzling to imagine what excuse she could have framed for such an interference with Mary’s liberty. Whether, however, she did attempt such an interference is one of those Marian problems which defy solution. Notwithstanding Elizabeth’s indignant denial of the report that she had ordered her “admiral and navy” to impeach Mary’s passage, it is highly probable that a watch was kept, and that the capture of the voyager would have been a welcome service. And not alone to Elizabeth. Such leaders of the Protestants in Scotland as Lord James Stuart, Morton, and Maitland,

harboured a secret desire that Mary "might be stayed." Maitland, indeed, went so far as to wish the passports had been granted if Mary's galleys were to be allowed to "quietly pass"; and Elizabeth's chief minister, after noting that his mistress had three ships in the North Seas, added the meaning comment: "I think they will be sorry to see her pass."

Much of this was probably known to Mary, or guessed at. And she shaped her plans accordingly. "What she will do, or where she will embark," wrote the English Ambassador, "she will own to never a Scotsman, and but to few French." For greater safety and the more complete confusion of English spies, Mary divided her retinue, sending the most considerable part via Dieppe, and accompanying the remainder in a leisurely progress to the coast of the narrow seas. That device gave her the choice of Boulogne and Calais from whence to make her own departure. Deciding upon the latter port, she finally set sail on the 14th of August, 1561, her fleet consisting of two small galleys and her train not exceeding sixty persons.

As the galleys drew away to sea, Mary Stuart realized the pathos of her situation. Brantôme has told us how she kept her eyes fixed on the receding shore, sighing continually, "Farewell, France, farewell! I shall never see you more!" and shedding many tears. That night she slept on deck in hope the early morning would give her one more glimpse of land. Her longing was gratified: when the new day dawned, the grey outline of the French coast was

still visible, but soon the wind freshened, and ere noon the only horizon line she could see was where the base of heaven's arch rested on the ocean's brim. She had taken her last farewell.

II

For four days Mary Stuart is hidden from view. By oar and sail her two galleys made their slow voyage from the Channel to the North Sea, wearing gradually towards the Firth of Forth and the port of Leith.

But what was doing in her ancient capital of Edinburgh? Were her nobles and burghers astir with preparations for the Queen's homecoming? More than a month had passed since it was bruited she was returning—since, indeed, letters under her own hand had given definite assurance of the imminence of that event. Maitland was the possessor of one of those letters, and it made him uneasy. Not merely because it charged him to have ready "some money for my household and other expenses," but because it chided him with his traffic with England, credited him with perfect knowledge of all the political secrets of the day, and roundly assured him that "if anything goes wrong after I trust you, you are he whom I shall blame first."

Although many of the Scottish lords devoutly wished Mary had remained in France till the day of her death, the assurance of her speedy return obliged them to make a feint at preparing for that event. Hence the summons issued on the 6th of August convening the nobility for the last day of that month

to take "order for quietness in the realm." Beyond that nothing was attempted officially. "There is little preparation yet," wrote Thomas Randolph on the 9th of August, "and scarcely any man expects her." Huntly's wife, he added, had consulted her familiar, and that oracle had declared "the Queen shall never set her foot on Scottish ground." Lord James Stuart was in perplexity; he knew the advent of the Queen would increase his difficulties with the Papal party. Maitland grew more perturbed every day. "Though I be not in greatest place," he wrote Cecil, "yet is not my danger least, specially when she shall come home." There were many heavy hearts in Edinburgh as the French galleys drew near the Firth of Forth.

And when the sun went down on Monday the 18th of August there fell over that arm of the sea a dense summer fog. Nor had it lifted at dawn the next day. But it was from out that mist the citizens of Leith heard the salute of guns which signalled the return of their thirteen-years-absent Queen. John Knox marked the portent of nature, and read destiny in the clouds. "The very face of heaven," he wrote, "the time of her arrival, did manifestly speak what comfort was brought into this country by her, to wit dolour, darkness, and all impiety, for in the memory of man was never seen a more dolorous face of the heaven than was at her arrival."

To Mary's impressionable nature that lowering haze may have seemed as evil an omen as it was to the prophetic vision of Knox. Nor was she welcomed with such human smiles as might have counter-

acted the frowns of the heavens. She came to her own, and not one was ready to receive her.

Nay, there was one. Thanks, perhaps, to an overnight carousal or licentious adventure at Leith, Lord Robert Stuart, one of the numerous bastard sons of James V., earned the distinction of being the only member of the Scottish nobility to welcome Mary when she stepped ashore at Leith. That was at ten o'clock in the morning, and, probably to give the citizens of Edinburgh time to bestir themselves, and news of her arrival sent to such lords as were within the reach of messengers, the Queen rested for an hour in the house of a Leith citizen. When at length the procession set out for Holyrood Palace, it was of so sorry a nature—mean horses and rude trappings—that Mary, accustomed to the pomp of France, wept at her homecoming as copiously as she had celebrated her farewell to Calais. And when, the following morning, she was awakened from her slumbers by the psalm-singing of Knox's dour followers, she must have deplored still more the hard fate which had compelled her return to such serious subjects.

For it was a changed Scotland. She had left it a monarchy; she found it a religious republic. In the battle waged by Mary of Guise for royal authority and the Catholic religion, with John Knox as her adversary, insisting upon the limitations of kingly power and the supreme virtues of Protestantism the victory had been won by the dauntless reformer. But one short year before Mary's return, the Parliament of Scotland, comprising all the nobles of the

land and the Bishops of the Church and the delegates of the boroughs, had made a clean sweep of the old faith, abolishing in three relentless Acts the worship of saints, the authority of the Pope, and the practice of the Mass, and imposing for a third celebration of the latter the penalty of death. So potent was the magnetic power of Knox, whose voice was able in an hour to inspire more valour than "six hundred trumpets," that most of the nobles flocked to his banner, and became those "Lords of the Congregation" who were to thwart the young Queen at every turn.

Such was one of the men with whom the returned exile had to reckon ; the one man proof against her smiles, insensible to her wit, obdurate to her tears. Another was the Lord James Stuart, her own half-brother, who had worn her crown but for the bar sinister in his own escutcheon. He was the leader of the Lords of the Congregation, but less uncharitable than Knox ; whether, however, from temperament or for the sake of his own advancement, is a matter of dispute. At his side stood Maitland of Lethington, the adroit diplomatist, the caustic wit of those unruly days, who yet, in all his wayward courses, never failed in patriotism. Among the others who quickly gathered in Mary's Court were the miserly Duke of Châtelherault and his rack-brain son, the Earl of Arran ; the Earl of Huntly, chief of the Gordon clan, and an arrant time-server ; the Lords Robert and John Stuart, two other reminders of her father's licentious adventures ; James Douglas, Earl of Morton, a staunch follower of

Knox, and by some thought “the strongest man in Scotland”; and many another noble destined to play a conspicuous rôle in the stirring events of the next few years. A few weeks later, too, Mary’s Court was increased by the arrival of James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, the “glorious, rash, and hazardous young man” whose acquaintance she had made a year previously at the Court of France. Were it only for the valiant assistance he had given Mary of Guise, the Scottish Queen must have been predisposed in Bothwell’s favour—a favour exemplified by the inclusion of his name in the list of her first Privy Council.

Thanks to her buoyant nature, and despite the difficulties of her new position, Mary Stuart quickly recovered her spirits. To read the letters and records of those autumn months of 1561 is to gain an impression of a bright, vivacious woman who had resolved to order her conduct warily, and trust to her personal charms and mental gifts as her most valuable assets in an unequal conflict.

In their rude and serious way, her subjects did their best to brighten her home-coming. Her state entry into Edinburgh a fortnight after her return was decked out as well as the burghers knew how. The artillery of the castle “shot vehemently,” there was an escort of fifty young men in the guise of Moors, and sixteen grave citizens clad in black velvet gowns and crimson doublets supported the panoply of purple velvet under which the young queen made her progress through the city. Arches brightly painted and adorned with coats of arms;

a cloud out of which there descended a “bonnie bairn” to offer the keys of the town; platforms occupied by fair virgins in “most heavenly clothing”; fountains running with wine; a goodly present of a cupboard of gilt plate—such were among the graces of that memorable day. But there were shadows in the picture. The “bonnie bairn” handed Mary not only the keys of Edinburgh, but a copy of the psalm-book beloved of the congregation. She was but just spared, through Huntly’s intervention, the spectacle of a priest being burnt while elevating the Mass; and when she reached the threshold of Holyrood once more she had perforce to listen to a final singing and speech-making, which included an oration against the old religion.

Even during those early months the forbidding spectre of religious dissension was never far away. In loyal fulfilment of his promise, the Lord James Stuart saw that she had liberty to attend Mass in her own private chapel; but, within a few days, “as the wax candles and some other ornaments of the altar were carried by a servant, a fellow pulled them from the bearer and trod them in the mire.” James Stuart could no more prevent such persecution than he could bridle the fearless tongue of Knox. The reformer had an early interview with Mary, and he “knocked so hastily upon her heart that he made her weep.” But his knocking was in vain; she could not reason, she said, but she knew what she ought to believe. Knox admitted his defeat; the Queen’s Catholic lessons were so deeply imprinted in her heart that the substance and the quality were

like to perish together: "I would be glad to be deceived, but I fear I shall not." Turn where she would, Mary was ever confronted with the stern image of Protestantism. The pleasure of her first progress through her kingdom was marred by pageants which did "too plainly condemn the errors of the world"; and the gaunt shadow threw a gloom over private hospitality, as when the grave, ancient Laird of Lundie met her on his threshold and offered her his house, land, goods and gear, and sons, but implored her not to celebrate Mass under his roof.

Amid all these provocations Mary, as Maitland noted, behaved herself "gently"; if anything was amiss, he added, the fault was rather in themselves. And especially in Knox, who was given to uttering words "not easily digested by a weak stomach." He wished the reformer would deal with her "more gently, being a young Princess unpersuaded."

What did it all mean, this unperturbed sweetness on Mary's part? The worthy Randolph, Elizabeth's faithful newsgatherer in Scotland, could give no certain answer. He was at his wits' end. Prior to the Queen's home-coming, it had not been difficult to divine how events were shaping; now he was bewildered; the whole state of the realm had been changed by one woman. All he was sure of was:

"Whatsoever policy is in all the chief and best-practised heads in France, whatsoever craft, falsehood, or deceit is in all the subtle brains of Scotland, is either fresh in this one woman's memory, or she can fetch it with a wet finger."

|III

Mary Stuart was a bewitcher of men. Save for John Knox, no member of the sterner sex could withstand her charms. The anthology begun by Brantôme and Ronsard in France constantly swelled in volume so long as she lived, and has been augmented by countless admirers who never saw her face. "Her great beauty and virtue grew in such sort," said Brantôme, "that when she was about fifteen years old her loveliness began to shine in its bright noonday, and to shame the sun itself with its brilliance, so beautiful was she." The poets, as has been noted, piled up countless adjectives in her praise: her fair skin, her bright eyes, her lovely hands, and inimitable grace, were sung in verses innumerable. From the puny Francis to the virile Bothwell, all were ready to count everything but loss if they might win her.

But was she really a beautiful woman? Or was it that, having passably good features, her charm consisted in a fascination combined of many elements?

For answer to such questions, the eulogies of poets and historians are worthless. The only testimony of any value is that of the portraits. They are beyond counting, and many are so replete with beauty as to justify the poets' highest praise. Unfortunately, however, all the most lovely portraits have been put out of court as the work of artists who never saw their model; they have been painted from rhetoric and sentiment rather than fact;

and all that the winnowing of criticism has left is a series of canvases, the outstanding qualities of which have been thus callously tabulated : “A broad, high forehead; high cheek-bones; hazel eyes with thick lids; a long, straight nose, somewhat incurved; and closely compressed lips. A furtive glance, and occasionally the suggestion of a slight squint.”

Plainly, then, the witchery of Mary Stuart did not depend upon beauty of face. Or was it that she possessed that “peculiar beauty in which the form is lost in the expression, and which every painter therefore has represented differently?” It is agreed, at any rate, that she was a woman of large and stately figure, with a well-developed bust; that her grace of movement was irresistible; that her voice was soft and musical, and excelled in song; that her hands were shapely and slender, and shone to advantage over the strings of the lute or the pattern of tapestry; that her eyes sparkled with light; that her skin was fair; and that her conversation was merry and arch.

To those not inconsiderable assets must be added the crowning fact that Mary’s whole nature vibrated with the joy of life. It was a merry Court she kept; while Elizabeth’s maids of honour risked their necks by marrying, Mary’s four namesakes were encouraged in the arts and conquests of love, and could count upon their mistress as the most joyful guest at their espousals. The ladies of the Court, taking their cue from Mary, were “merry, leaping and dancing, lusty and fair.” The Queen was always ready for frolic; now a laughing onlooker

while twelve of her lords, half-disguised as women, ran at the ring; anon a vivacious competitor in a game of skittles against the serious Randolph. The countless pages of Randolph's letters are constantly brightened by vignettes of Mary's volatile ways: we see her in a corner of her chamber conversing eagerly with a French guest, very merry, and with blush following blush; to-day she lays aside the cares of State for "mirth and pastime on the sands of Leith"; if Elizabeth's agent must talk politics she will hear him walking in her garden'; at a banquet where Randolph was placed that he might see all, she drank to the health of her cousin Elizabeth, and then passed him the cup of gold in which she had pledged the toast; on her warlike expedition against the recreant Huntly she desired nothing so much as to be a man "to know what life it was to lie all night in the fields" and strut along a causeway with a buckler and broadsword; now Randolph is riding hunting by her side, and anon looks on while she shoots at the butts; here she is "laughing heartily" as she reads a letter from Elizabeth; there she is thrusting into her bosom, that it may be next her heart, another missive from that inscrutable cousin. But of all the inimitable pictures Randolph has left us, none can compare for laughter and archness with that in which he confesses how the tables were turned upon himself. Charged with weighty messages from England, he followed Mary to St. Andrews and spent three whole days in strategic attempts to elicit her answer. At last, patience failing, he made direct request for her reply.

"I see now," she retorted, "that you are weary of this company and treatment. I sent for you to be merry, and to see how like a bourgeois-wife I live with my little troop, and you will interrupt our pastimes with your great and grave matters. I pray you, sir, if you be weary here, return home to Edinburgh, and keep your gravity and great embassy until the Queen comes thither; for I assure you, you shall not get her here, nor know I myself where she is gone. You see neither cloth of state, nor such appearance that you may think there is a Queen here; nor I would not that you should think that I am she at St. Andrews that I was at Edinburgh."

Some of her father's gaberlunzie blood ran in Mary's veins. Restricted by her sex from such excesses as James V. indulged, she yet at times carried levity to almost dangerous lengths. It was not unseemly to retire to St. Andrews and live for a time as a "bourgeois-wife," but that in Edinburgh she should be the ringleader of a disguised band and wander up and down the town demanding pledges of every man, and then sit down to a roistering meal in a lodging-house, was carrying familiarity too far.

But these things help to explain much. They are a justification of the guess which has been hazarded that there must have been something in her expression or manner to "inspire men with sexual passion rather than high-minded devotion or fear. Elizabeth, whose moral conduct, according to all known evidence and presumption, was much more reprehensible than that of Mary, never allowed her

slaves to assume the slightest liberty or overt familiarity on the strength of her passing fancy for them. But Mary's qualities were widely different from those of her cousin. She was as tenacious of her sovereign privileges as was Elizabeth, and could be as haughty as she; but when she unbent in her exuberant love of life and avidity for pleasure, she drew men to her by sweet feminine wiles, and the unconscious but powerful fascination of her ardent nature. Unlike Elizabeth, she did not hector her lovers into a condition of maudlin ecstasy, but inspired them willingly or unwillingly with a passion so strong that it overcame fear and made them bold."

How bold, two distressing episodes are on record to prove. They have no connection with those after-years when scandal grew busy with Mary's name; they rest on contemporary letters penned long before those incidents which have divided the world into two hostile camps.

One befell in the autumn of 1562. That untoward happening introduces the courtly figure of Sir Henry Sidney, the father of the more famous Sir Philip, who had been sent by Elizabeth on an embassy to the Scottish Queen. His mission was concluded, and he was walking with Mary in the garden of Holyrood, when an infatuated man known as Captain Hepburn presumed to break in on the interview by thrusting a letter into the Queen's hand. That was insolence enough, but it was chivalry itself compared with the contents of the document. Happily, Mary, thinking it to be some sort of a petition, did not open it in Sidney's

presence, but handed it to her half-brother, and he delayed examining the paper until such time as Captain Hepburn was far from Holyrood. What it bore was a set of lascivious verses and an indecent sketch. Well might such an incident, as Randolph reported, “offend Her Grace greatly, the more also that it was done at a time that might give Sir Henry Sidney and the other gentleman with him to muse much at his boldness, or judge of herself otherwise than occasion is given by her or hers.”

Yet Mary did not take the lesson to heart. Three months later there arrived at her Court one whom she would have been wise not to have treated so familiarly as she did. This was the notorious Chastelard, a French youth of gentle birth, soldier, scholar, and poet, whom Mary had met before in the galley which bore her home. On that voyage he had evidently fallen a victim to her charms, but, despairing of any conquest, had returned to France. And now he was back again—the moth “recalled to the flame whose warmth was life and death to it.” On passing through London he had boasted to a friend that he was bound for Scotland to see his ladylove. With the ostensible excuse of bearing a letter from M. d’Amville, he gained immediate access to Mary’s presence, and ere long was high in favour, presenting her “a book of his own making written in metre.” Mary, her spirits heightened by the presence of one who reminded her of the gay Court of France, and could turn a Gallic compliment and feed her ears with news of the life she had left behind, answered sonnet with sonnet, gave her guest

a favourite horse to ride, honoured him in the dance, leant upon his shoulder in public, and stole a kiss of his neck when opportunity offered. "He is well entertained," noted Randolph before there was any suspicion that ought was amiss, "and has great conference with the Queen."

On such a gallant as Chastelard all this could have but one effect. He belonged to a Court where such favours had only one meaning, and so he dashed into the flame. On a night in February, 1563, he hid himself in Mary's bedchamber, only, however, to be discovered by her ladies before the Queen retired. When told next morning what had happened, she ordered the offender to leave the Court, and never seek her presence again. But, two nights later, taking courage apparently from the lightness of his punishment, the infatuated man repeated his attempt: this time waiting until Mary was about to step into bed before "setting upon her with such force, and in such impudent sort, that the Queen herself was fain to cry for help."

Such insolence could have only one issue. Chastelard was seized, imprisoned, speedily tried, and executed. Mary took "some grief of mind, but begins to be merry again," reported Randolph, adding, however, that it was her half-brother, James Stuart, who felt most sorrow for the outrage, "lest worse be judged of it, and of the familiar usage of such a varlet, than was meant by her." Knox, of course, drew his own moral years later, but his judgment was coloured by after-events. That Mary Stuart had a passionate, even voluptuous, nature is

more than probable, yet there may be no necessity to think evil of her for the indecency of Captain Hepburn and the attempted violation of Chastelard ; but those incidents do show how her high spirits and familiar manner laid her open to the advances of sensual men.

IV

Wedding-feasts were of frequent occurrence at the Court of Mary Stuart. She appears to have had more than the ordinary woman's delight in affairs of the heart. No one, it seems, invited her in vain to a marriage festival. Less than six months after her return, Lord John Stuart, one of her half-brothers, took for his wife the sister of James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, and Mary made a special journey to Crichton Castle to grace the ceremony, which was celebrated with "much good sport and pastime." A month later came the espousals of her most notable half-brother, James Stuart, soon to be distinguished as the Earl of Moray. That was a resplendent marriage, so rich in its trappings that a French visitor confessed he never saw such a bridal even in his own country. The feast was given by Mary, who, judging from the records of the time, entered into the joyousness of the occasion with as much zest as the bride and bridegroom.

Such festivities could not happen too often for the vivacious young Queen. "The Queen maketh the feast" was a frequent phrase on Randolph's pen when recording the marriages of Mary's lords and ladies ; any day she would rather go to a wedding

than preside at a Council of State. Once, and once only, did she emulate Elizabeth in "storming" at a bridal, but that was when the fifty-five-year-old Knox shocked her romantic sentiment by marrying a girl of sixteen.

While, however, the victims of Cupid were falling all around her, she remained immune to his darts. This puzzled her subjects not a little. As bridal followed bridal, many "began to wish the Queen might be next." But she gave no sign. And when those nearest to her, and who were privileged to give more than hints, ventured to regret that so young and charming a Queen should remain unwed, her rejoinders varied with her mood. Now she laughingly declared that she would have none other husband than her cousin of England, or wished Elizabeth were a man that an end might be put to the marriage problems of both; anon she affirmed the widow's life to be best, most honourable and quiet. One day she deplored that nobody wanted to marry her; the next, in a coquettish spirit, contradicted herself, and affirmed she might marry where she willed; or, in a more tearful mood, she would pretend that the remembrance of her late husband was yet too fresh to allow her to think of his successor.

So complicated were the political and religious issues of the time, and so much for peace or war depended upon her choice, that Mary's remarriage began to be discussed throughout Europe before Francis II. was laid in his tomb. It was impossible for her to please everybody. Her own Protestant

nobles, with John Knox at their head, would naturally resent her union with a Roman Catholic; France, for its own safety, would not willingly see her linked with the royal House of Spain; and Elizabeth, whose heir Mary claimed to be, would, above all else, wish that her marriage should not strengthen her position with the English Catholics.

Such of Mary Stuart's subjects as realized the difficulties of her position, but had no inkling of her private thoughts, no doubt credited those difficulties with being the sole cause of her continued widowhood. But they were not. Almost coincident with her return to Scotland she appears to have begun fostering an ambitious future. It was not merely that she intended to see who would make the most of her "and offer fairest"; she had for her own part a clear conception of the goal she would reach. And no doubt she derived more than womanly amusement from the scramble of suitors for her hand. Those suitors made an imposing list—the Archduke Charles of Austria, the Kings of Denmark and Sweden, the Duke of Nemours, the Earls of Leicester and Warwick, Lord Henry Darnley, and several of her own nobles. Of all these Eric XIV. of Sweden pressed his suit with most ardour. Mary had not been two months a widow before he entered the lists. The April after she returned to Scotland he sent her a distinguished ambassador, "a man of good age, and long beard, turning white," who banqueted the Queen's ladies sumptuously, and distributed costly presents. Mary received her venerable visitor graciously, favoured him with a

long interview, accepted his master's full-length portrait, and then, placing the picture in her secret cabinet among things she esteemed "either for antiquity or novelty," dismissed the matter from her mind.

Not yet could she spare even a thought for the King of Sweden or any of his rivals. She aimed at bigger game. The man she wished to wed was Don Carlos, son and heir of Philip II. of Spain. He had in reversion not merely Spain and its American possessions, but other wide domains. To these she would bring the kingdoms of Scotland and England, for once the wife of Don Carlos, the power of Spain would be sufficient to drive Elizabeth from her throne. That power would also be equal to the task of re-establishing the Catholic faith in both the latter countries. Such was Mary's ambitious programme; it was a vision of power entirely eclipsing the memory of her glory as the Queen of France. The character of her desired husband was of no moment compared with the realization of such an ambition; that he was wilful and proud, already showed signs of insanity, and was vicious and disorderly in public and private, weighed nothing against the splendour of his inheritance.

Mary's secret was known to few. She took her half-brother, the Earl of Moray, into her confidence, and also the crafty Maitland, whom she employed in the necessary negotiations. De Quadra, too, the Spanish Ambassador at the English Court, was in the plot, and did more than anyone to further the Scottish Queen's ambition. He set forth the advan-

tages of the match in so adroit a manner that the slow-witted Philip II. was at last convinced, and gave his tentative support to its consummation. But that support came too late. De Quadra died suddenly, and, for lack of another exponent of Mary's cause, such favour as Philip II. had shown to the marriage gradually gave place to indifference, and then pronounced opposition.

Yet there was a period when Mary thought she had attained her end. The emissary de Quadra sent to her Court reported so favourably of Philip's attitude that she at once lost all interest in other proposals for her marriage, and she remained in that heightened mood until the death of the Spanish Ambassador changed everything. With that event she saw the splendid crown of Spain slipping from her grasp, the fading of her glorious visions, the death of her ambitions. It was in those days the English Ambassador began to grow suspicious: "I fear," Randolph wrote, "she is more Spanish than Imperial"; and a little later: "I judge her heart is in Spain." The secret had been well kept, so well, indeed, that the scheme was not suspected until all possibility of its fulfilment had vanished.

Then came the reaction. "For two months," so Randolph reported in the closing days of 1563, "she has been divers time in great melancholy, her grief is marvellous secret, and she often weeps when there is little apparent occasion." Those were heavy times for Mary; she took no pleasure in company or talk; for days at a stretch she kept her bed, "not well at ease" as she confessed, but excusing her

indolence as the result of over-exertion in dancing. The real cause could have been divined only by those acquainted with the letters which were passing between the Scottish and Spanish Courts—letters which daily made more and more clear the frustration of Mary's brightest hopes.

In a few weeks, however, her recuperative power came to her aid. If the Spanish throne were denied her, her years were yet young, life sweet, and love possible. Don Carlos had been erased from the list of suitors, but many names remained. And, with that fatality which so often attended her choice, she decided to give her hand to her cousin, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley.

Both he and his father, the Earl of Lennox, were exiles in England. As a traitor to his country, Lennox, in 1545, had been declared an outlaw by the Scottish Parliament, but a year previously he had married the Lady Margaret Douglas, the niece of Henry VIII., and consequently his son Henry was regarded by the English Catholics as more entitled to the throne of England than Elizabeth herself. The forfeiture of Lennox from his Scottish estates had continued eighteen years, but now fortune seemed to be taking a turn in his favour. His wife was something of a schemer, and she at last so wrought upon Elizabeth that the English Queen was induced to request Mary to restore the family to their Scottish lands and honours. Mary hastened to comply, and when Lennox reached Edinburgh he was summoned to her presence while still in his riding-clothes. The warmth of his re-

ception was unmistakable ; not only was the Council called in immediately to receive him and give him hearty greeting, but on retiring to his apartments he found them richly plenished with hangings and beds from the Queen's own store. Randolph dined with him a few days later and noted the "rich and fair bed" he had chosen for his own repose, and also the "passage made through the wall" to give him speedy access to Mary's apartments.

All this, and the costly presents made by Lennox to Mary and her ministers and ladies, was known to Elizabeth. Yet she persisted in proposing her own favourite, Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, as a suitable consort for the Scottish Queen. Nor did she refuse her consent to Mary's request that Darnley should be allowed to join his father in Scotland. Elizabeth's passport for Darnley may be taken as the measure of her seriousness in urging the merits of Leicester.

So Darnley set out for Scotland in high hopes. He was in his twentieth year, liberally endowed with physical attractions, tall, but well-proportioned, accomplished in sports and the use of arms, but "beardless and lady-faced." His weak countenance was the image of his mind. A "young, pretty fool" was the verdict of one who knew him well. Every word was true ; but that the two adjectives were accurate did not counterbalance the defect of the noun.

For a few weeks after his arrival in Scotland Darnley seems to have curbed his wilful nature. His welcome by Mary was promising enough, and

her courtiers were favourably impressed by his outward appearance. But he could not preserve the disguise for long. He soon revealed his disposition by choosing as his friends the most roysterer and licentious lords of the Court; as Mary's favour increased he became insolent and domineering; while he was being nursed by her through an attack of measles he threatened the aged Duke of Châtelherault that he would "break his pate" when he recovered; a messenger who brought him unwelcome news barely escaped a fatal thrust from his dagger; and when he was shown on a map of Scotland the extent of Moray's lands, he roundly declared they were too large.

"God must send him a short end," was Randolph's summing up of the situation on behalf of Mary's subjects, "or themselves a miserable life."

But Mary Stuart held to her purpose. Whether she had really fallen in love with that "best-proportioned long man," or whether she anticipated such an issue once he was her husband, or whether —other ambitions having failed—she determined to risk the experiment in hope of re-establishing Catholicism in Scotland and England, or what her motive was, who can say? Heedless of Elizabeth's protests, sincere or insincere, she hurried forward to the fatal step. Being related to Darnley within the prohibited degree, a Papal dispensation was necessary to legitimate the marriage, and she so far paid tribute to her religious faith as to dispatch an emissary for that dispensation; but, finding the accomplishment of her purpose was being threatened

by the opposition of Moray and the possibility of a rebellion, she flung Catholic scruples to the winds, ignored the non-arrival of the Pope's decree, and took Darnley's hand in marriage on the 29th of July, 1565, some weeks before Rome had accorded the necessary permission.

Mary was wedded on a Sunday, in the chapel of Holyrood, between the hours of five and six in the morning. After the custom of her realm, divers of her nobles waited at her chamber to escort her to the altar, doubtless eagerly anticipating the radiant picture she would make in her bridal array.

But when she appeared it was in a "great mourning-gown of black, with the great wide mourning-hood," similar to that in which she had followed her first husband to his tomb.

V

Whatever happiness Mary Stuart derived from her marriage was of brief duration. Having attained the purpose for which he had come to Scotland, Darnley cast away restraint and showed himself as he was. And his real nature was not of a kind to inspire any woman with love, especially such a woman as his spirited and large-planning wife.

"He loseth many of his friends daily," was reported of Darnley three weeks after his marriage; his soldiers, taking their cue from his own hectoring manner, were in frequent conflict with the burghers of Edinburgh; and when, a month later, Mary took the field against Moray and the other lords who were opposed to her marriage, it was noted that

Darnley was the only one who sported himself in a “gilt corselet.”

Soon, too, wife and husband were in open quarrel. Less than two months after they had plighted their troth in Holyrood Chapel it became necessary to select a commander for the Queen's forces, and while Darnley insisted on the post being given to his father, Mary was equally determined to bestow the appointment on the Earl of Bothwell. That cloud in the heavens rapidly grew blacker. Mary, so the gossip ran, was already repenting her haste in marrying “the sergeant porter”; and she had not been a wife four months when she openly wished Darnley's father “had never come into Scotland.” Ere the year closed, too, Randolph was reporting to Cecil some significant facts.

“A while since,” he wrote, “there was nothing but King and Queen, His Majesty and hers; now ‘the Queen's husband’ is most common. He was wont to be first named in all writings, but now is placed second. Certain pieces of money lately coined with both their faces *Hen. et Maria* are called in, and others framed. There are also private disorders between themselves.”

Some of those “private disorders” had their root in Darnley's wounded vanity. He had boundless ambition but no ability. If Mary ever anticipated that he would be of service to her in her plans for subverting Protestantism in Scotland and strengthening her hold on England, she was quickly undeceived. Darnley was the easy dupe of any schemer; he could not keep a secret a day. His chief delight was in

hunting and hawking ; he was addicted to drink and a frequenter of "Venus's chamber." And yet he aspired to the "crown matrimonial," the possession of which would have given him equal power with Mary in the government of Scotland. Had he proved himself worthy, Mary would no doubt have gladly shared her authority with her husband. After all, her position was one of great loneliness and danger ; her enemies were beyond number, her friends exceedingly few. And it must have been a bitter disappointment to discover that the man upon whom she had bestowed her hand was a weak-minded lover of pleasure, a vain poltroon, ambitious of the outward shows of regality but wholly deficient in the qualities of a ruler.

So the place in her confidence which Darnley should have occupied was left vacant. But not for long. Coincident with the overthrow of her schemes for an alliance with Spain, the Scottish Queen dismissed her French secretary, Roulet, and cast around for a successor who would be a less dangerous repository of secrets which must be kept from reaching the French Court. Her choice fell upon David Rizzio, an Italian musician who had been several years in her service as *valet de chambre*. The new appointment dated from the time when Mary resolved to shape her own destiny and make Darnley her husband, and in the plans which led to her marriage Rizzio was her most efficient helper. Randolph was not long in discovering that the Italian was a "chief dealer" in the Darnley match, while Darnley himself was soon hand in glove with the new secretary. But

as Darnley waned Rizzio waxed. "David is he that now works all," is Randolph's report in June; three months later information from Scotland bore how "a stranger, subject of another realm, has intruded himself into the name and authority of a king"; and in October, when Mary and Darnley were at quarrel over Bothwell, no man was "so great with her" as Rizzio—"a stranger, a varlet," who had "the whole guidance of Queen and country." The wheel had come full circle; what should have been Darnley's place was filled by David Rizzio.

James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, was the occasion, then, of Mary Stuart's first quarrel with her husband. In October, 1565, he was in his thirtieth year, a man of great physical strength, reckless courage, "glorious, rash, and hazardous." His portrait gives him regular and manly features, but the eyes are those of one capable of lawless ways. His thirty years had been filled with stirring events. Although professedly a Protestant, he had been the most fearless helper of Mary of Guise in her struggles with the Lords of the Congregation; and he cordially hated the Earl of Moray, who warmly returned the sentiment. His escapades made him familiar with many prisons in England as well as Scotland. Such a man could not but be feared. The Lords of the Congregation, despite his agreement with their faith, would fain have had him kept perpetual prisoner in England, especially as they divined in Mary a desire to "have him at all times ready to shake out of her pocket against us Protestants."

Mary had need of such a man. She knew his

faithfulness to her mother ; she was cognisant of his resolute courage and determination. He was at least a manly man ; and she probably discounted, even if she believed, the report which credited him with calling her “the Cardinal’s whore.” She may have sworn that Bothwell should never receive favour at her hands, but that was long before she knew how wholly Darnley was to fail her.

So Bothwell increased in power. He “takes great things upon him”; he is Mary’s “chief trust”; his Queen “places him in honour above any subject she hath”; he “doth all.”

Yet it was not Bothwell who was made the occasion of arousing Darnley’s fatal jealousy; the man chosen for that purpose was David Rizzio. Sinister hints about the Italian follow swiftly on the earliest quarrel between Mary and her husband; he had been guilty, so rumour whispered, of conduct detrimental to the Queen’s honour as a wife. Darnley, however, was led to that climax gradually. Was it not true that his wife had provided Rizzio with a seal for official papers with strict orders not to use it save on documents she had signed? Did he not aspire to the “crown matrimonial,” and was not Rizzio the greatest obstacle to his achieving that ambition? Had he, Darnley, so resplendent an equipage and train as his wife’s low-born secretary? What room in Holyrood was so sumptuously furnished as the Italian’s? What person about the Court so richly clad in velvets? And worse remained. Was he, Darnley, confident that the child in Mary’s womb was of his begetting? As the month of February, 1566, drew

to a close these innuendoes had done their work. Thus wrought upon, Darnley was ready to promise anything for revenge. And so he entered into a bond with certain lords for the destruction of his rival, agreeing in return that the exiled Moray should be allowed to come back to the enjoyment of his estates and honours.

For issue there transpired a tragic scene in Mary Stuart's supper-chamber in Holyrood on the evening of March the 9th, 1566.

Unconscious of the plot, the Queen was quietly partaking her evening meal in that tiny apartment, her companions being the Countess of Argyle, her half-brother Robert, the doomed Rizzio, and several attendants. About eight o'clock the little company was increased by the arrival of Darnley, who seated himself by Mary's side on a sofa, and slipped his arm around her waist. A few minutes later the hangings over the doorway parted again, to disclose the person of Lord Ruthven. He was in full armour, and his aspect made all the more forbidding by the ashen skin, the cavernous cheeks, and the sunken eyes, which told of the bed of sickness from which he had risen to take part in that night's dark deed.

"What strange sight is this, my lord?" asked Mary. "Are you mad?"

"We have been too long mad," answered Ruthven in hollow voice, adding, with a glance in the direction of Rizzio: "Let it please your Majesty that yonder man David come forth."

Conscious that the outer chamber was filled with

confederates, and that others of the band were in possession of the palace, Ruthven was in no mood to argue with Mary, or listen to her plea that if Rizzio had done wrong he should be punished by her lords. The scene was quickly over. Rizzio's cry, as he clung to Mary's gown, of "Save my life, madam, save my life!" and Ruthven's stern "Lay no hands on me!" as Mary's attendants showed signs of resistance, summoned others of the band, who dragged the fated Italian from the Queen's presence, and quickly dispatched him with more than fifty sword and dagger thrusts. Mary was spared the sight of the murder, but its accomplishment was speedily reported by one of her maids, to whom, as she wiped her eyes, she exclaimed : "No more tears ! I will think now of revenge."

After this, wrote a chronicler of the time, "the kingdom and Court was at quiet."

Three months later Mary Stuart fulfilled her time, and gave birth to a son—"so much your son," she said to Darnley, "that I fear it will be the worse for him hereafter."

But the breach between husband and wife was in no ways amended. Amid the conflicting reports of the time, it is difficult to arrive at a clear view of the truth ; the safest course is to rely upon the testimony of Mary's Catholic friends, who had every reason to take the most favourable view of her circumstances. "The Queen's greatest difficulty," wrote one such partial newsvendor in the August of 1566, "is the quarrel with the King, her husband. He is an ambitious, inconstant youth, and would

like to rule the realm. Hence has arisen such distrust between him and the Queen, that report says they have not cohabited since the child's birth, to the King's displeasure."

Two months passed, and Mary lay dangerously ill at Jedburgh. Her life was despaired of. Yet Darnley was absent—"busy in another part of the kingdom with matters of no consequence." And as the Queen hovered between life and death, in another room of the same house Maitland was penning a letter to the Catholic Scottish Ambassador at Paris. "The occasion of the Queen's sickness," he wrote, "is caused of thought and displeasure, and the root of it is the King. For she has done him so great honour, and contrary to the advice of her subjects, and he on the other part has recompensed her with such ingratitude, and misuses himself so toward her, that it is heartrending for her to think that he should be her husband.

"And," concluded Maitland, "how to be free of him she sees no outgate."

CHAPTER I

THE MURDER

► ON the last day of November, 1566, two men were engaged in earnest conversation on the roadside half way between the city of Edinburgh and Craigmillar Castle. Their disparity of age was great, the one having an extremely boyish face, the other the grave countenance of a man well advanced in years. Each was richly clad, as became his rank, for the older man was the Ambassador of France to the Court of Mary Stuart; the younger was the husband of that Queen and titular King of Scotland.

Darnley was responsible for that unconventional conference. He was in sore perplexity. At last he had become conscious that he was the one person in his wife's retinue for whom she had no smile; proofs were abundant that he had lost not only Mary's affection, but her tolerance of his presence; and he knew, too, that none of her lords were "so poor as to do him reverence." So he had turned to Monsieur du Croq, the French Ambassador, for advice, and requested him to meet him in the privacy of the open air half a league from Edinburgh.

Du Croq was punctual to the appointment, and

for a considerable time the two paced to and fro in serious talk. What actually passed between them is not on record, but the purport of the interview can be divined from the letter du Croq dispatched to Paris two days later.

“I found,” he wrote, “that things go still worse and worse. To speak my mind freely to you; I do not expect, upon several accounts, any good understanding between them, unless God effectually put to His hand. I shall name only two. The first is, the King will never humble himself as he ought; the other is, the Queen can’t perceive any one nobleman speaking with the King, but at once she suspects some contrivance among them.”

Du Croq would have written still more ominously had he been aware of the scene which had transpired in Craigmillar Castle a few days earlier. All he knew, however, was that Mary was “in deep grief and sorrow,” and was continually ejaculating :

“I could wish to be dead!”

She had been in that mood for several weeks. At the beginning of the month, letters had reached her from Darnley—letters which she had read to Moray and Huntly and Maitland, and which had prompted her to declare that unless she were freed from her husband she could have no pleasure in life. Those complaints must have reminded Maitland of his own words: “And how to be free of him she sees no outgate.”

Plainly it was time some action was taken. Among the lords in attendance upon Mary at Craigmillar were the four most powerful nobles of her

Court—the Earls Moray, Bothwell, Argyle, and Huntly. The quintette was completed by Maitland, whose subtle brain amply compensated his lack of lands and titles. Nimbler-witted than the peers, and perhaps more sensitive to the Queen's depression than they, Maitland decided to take the lead in a scheme to rid her of her husband. His first step was to win the support of Moray: no difficult task perhaps, inasmuch as he and the Queen's half-brother had often aforetime been co-partners in plot and diplomacy.

No sooner had Moray's support been secured, than Maitland hastened to enlist the aid of the other nobles. So early in the day did he set to work that the next peer on his list, the Earl of Argyle, was yet in bed when he and Moray sought an interview. Argyle, however, had no objection to receiving his visitors, and listened in a sympathetic manner, while they in turn expressed their sorrow that the Earl of Morton and other lords implicated in the murder of Rizzio should still remain in banishment. Moray was particularly eloquent on the subject; the plot for the removal of Rizzio had been devised partly for his benefit; he would be a despicable ingrate did he not exert himself to the utmost to secure Morton's pardon. Argyle admitted the justice of the argument; for his part he was willing to assist the return of the exiles provided nothing was done to offend the Queen.

Maitland seized upon that opening with avidity.

“The quickest and best way to obtain Morton's pardon,” he interjected, “is to promise the Queen

we will find a way to procure a divorce from her husband."

"I know not how that may be done," rejoined Argyle.

"My lord," answered Maitland cautiously, "trouble not yourself about that; we will find the means to make her quit of him, provided you and my Lord Huntly will look on and not be offended."

But Argyle could not speak for Huntly. He, however, when sent for, was not long in joining the trio. The situation was explained by Moray and Maitland, the latter adroitly suggesting that if Huntly gave his support to the scheme in hand his co-partners would use their influence to secure the restoration to him of those family estates which had been forfeited by his father's rebellion. Tempted by such a bait, Huntly gave his adhesion with alacrity. One other noble remained, the Earl of Bothwell, but when the four passed to his chamber and expounded their scheme, they found a ready listener and willing adherent.

United in the purpose they had in view, if not in the manner of its attainment, the five now sought an interview with Mary. With a wisdom which did them credit, the plotters allowed Maitland to state their object. He was a persuasive pleader. He reminded the Queen of her husband's many and grievous offences, of his ingratitude for the honours she had bestowed upon him, of his persistent continuance in evil courses, and promised that, in consideration of her pardoning Morton and the other lords, her nobles would devise a plan

for a divorce without her moving in the action in any way.

Mary was not unwilling, provided the divorce were procured lawfully, and that its achievement did not prejudice her son.

Here Bothwell intervened. His own case illustrated the point. Although his father had divorced his wife, yet he, their son, had succeeded to the family estates without let or hindrance.

Various suggestions were bandied to and fro. After the divorce, Darnley might be allowed to remain in a certain part of the country, or given permission to leave the realm. Neither proposal pleased Mary. Darnley might change his mind; perhaps it would be best for her to return to France. The discussion, in fact, was threatening to end in confusion when Maitland interposed.

“Madam,” he said, “be assured that we, the principal of your Grace’s nobility and Council, shall find means whereby your Majesty shall be quit of him without prejudice to your son; and although my Lord of Moray is little less scrupulous for a Protestant than your Grace is for a Papist, I am sure he will look through his fingers, and, beholding our doings, say nothing.”

And there the matter ended, with a final protest on Mary’s part that nothing be done contrary to her honour or conscience.

Bothwell at least was grimly in earnest over the business. That day’s happenings leaped with his ambitions. And ere the sun set he seems to have discussed the matter with a faithful retainer, Sir

James Balfour, who at once set to work framing one of those bonds or deeds of agreement so beloved of the Scottish lords in those days. The document read thus :

“ That forasmuch as it is thought expedient and most profitable for the commonwealth, by the nobles and lords undersigned, that such a young fool and proud tyrant should not reign nor bear rule over them, they have concluded that he should be put off by one way or another, and whoever should take the deed in hand to do it, they would defend and support as done by themselves.”

Hunty and Argyle and Maitland subscribed their hands to that bond, but Moray declined. Bothwell, however, was well satisfied with the day's work ; those three signatures were an excellent beginning ; other opportunities would, no doubt, soon offer for additions to the list.

And now the picture brightens for a moment, much as a summer landscape under a canopy of heavy storm-clouds is lit up fitfully by a transient sunbeam. The one radiant, triumphant hour in Mary Stuart's life was given her at the baptism of her son. Two weeks after that fateful conference at Craig-millar her Court was set in that proud castle of Stirling where she had passed some of her own childhood days. Ambassadors from the Queen of England, the King of France, and the Duke of Savoy, were present at the baptismal ceremony, which, despite the opposition of John Knox, was carried out with all the pomp and ritual of the Roman Catholic Church. The banquet was worthy

of the great occasion, a scene of revelry and light, "dancing and playing in abundance"; and the feast in honour of the foreign visitors, two days later, culminated in "fire-balls, fire-spears, and all other things pleasant for the sight of man." This was all to the credit of Bothwell, to whom had been committed sole authority for the arrangements of the ceremony and after-festivities.

To Bothwell, mark; not to the child's father, Darnley. Where, then, was he? As the Queen's husband, as co-partner with her in the birth of that young life around which this rejoicing centred, had he no share in the occasion? None. He was in the castle and yet not of it. But the pen of du Croq, "the grave and discreet" French Ambassador, shall be allowed to tell the story.

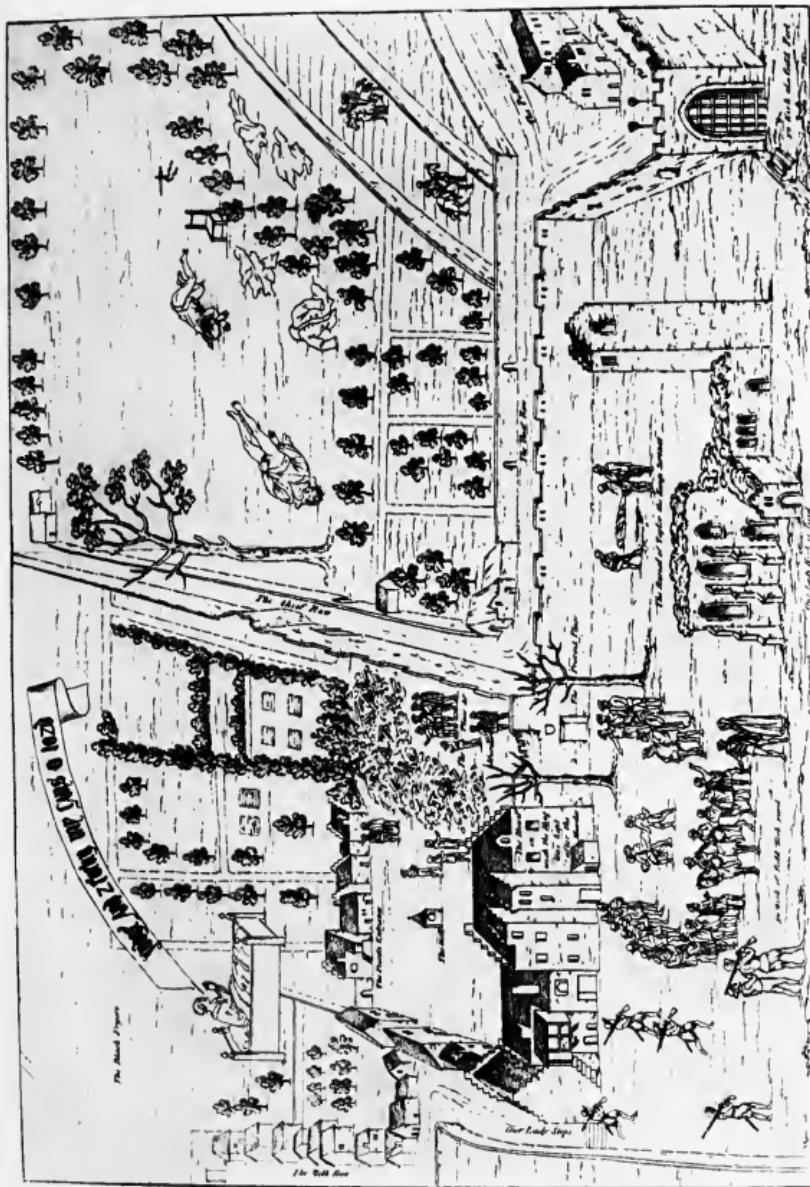
"The King," he wrote in his report for France, "had still given out that he would depart two days before the baptism; but when the time came on he made no sign of removing at all, only he still kept close within his own apartment. The very day of the baptism he sent three several times desiring me either to come and see him, or to appoint him an hour that he might come to me in my lodgings; so that I found myself obliged at last to signify to him, that seeing he was in no good correspondence with the Queen, I had it in charge from my Sovereign to have no conference with him; and I caused tell him likewise, that as it would not be very proper for him to come to my lodgings, because there was such a crowd of company there, so he might know that there were two passages to it, and if he should

enter by the one, I would be constrained to go out by the other. His bad deportment is incurable, nor can there be ever any good expected from him. I can't pretend to foretell how all may turn; but I will say that matters can't subsist long as they are, without being accompanied with sundry bad consequences."

On the day following the penning of that letter there happened in Stirling Castle an incident which opened Darnley's eyes to the storm which was gathering around him. Reminded by Bothwell, Moray, and the other plotters of Craigmillar, of her promise to allow the return of Morton, Mary, the day before Christmas, set her hand to the necessary pardon. That action startled Darnley from his lethargy. It removed his last hope of making a party of his own; when Morton came back he would naturally take sides with the lords who had secured his return; and, besides, Morton might wish to reckon with him for his treacherous conduct in connection with the murder of Rizzio. So that night Darnley, without any pretence of leave-taking, stole away from Stirling and hurried to his father at Glasgow. Hardly had he reached the abode of Lennox in the shadow of St. Mungo's Cathedral than he fell sick, of the smallpox, as some chroniclers declared, or of the "French pox" as others affirm.

For more than three weeks thereafter Mary went her usual way. Her husband's sickness no more disturbed her Christmas festivities than her extremity at Jedburgh had been allowed to check his

THE MURDER OF THE KING AND THE BURIAL OF TAYLOR.





HENRY, LORD DARNLEY.

THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

pastimes ; she journeyed to Drymen for a Yuletide visit, then returned to Stirling, and by the fourteenth day of the new year was back in Edinburgh once more. Up to that date Bothwell was constantly by her side, but now he left her for a few days on an important errand. No other signatures had been added to the Craigmillar bond ; all his efforts to secure the subscription of Moray had failed ; perhaps Morton, in the first flush of gratitude, would be more complaisant. So he hurried southward, and at Whittinghame met the returning exile, to whom he declared an agreement had been made for the removal of Darnley. What would Morton do ? Would he sign the bond ? Morton, however, did not allow his gratitude to get the upper hand of his caution. He was but now come from one trouble, he answered, and had little relish for another hazardous enterprise. But it was the Queen's wish, Bothwell replied ; she would have it to be done.

“Bring me the Queen's handwriting for a warrant,” Morton retorted, “and then I will give you an answer.” And with that Bothwell had to rest content.

Meanwhile, Mary remained in Edinburgh, busy, for one thing, with her pen. In James Beaton, Archbishop of Glasgow, and her Ambassador at the Court of France, she had a faithful and wise friend, one to whom she could speak her mind freely ; and it was to him she addressed a long letter on the 20th of January, 1567. Its chief purport was to acquaint the Archbishop with the tale-bearing of two of his servants, William

Walker and William Highgate, who had been spreading abroad a report to the effect that Darnley had plotted the deposition of Mary, the crowning of his baby son, and the assumption of the government by himself. Darnley, while this letter was being penned, was still lying sick at Glasgow, but the knowledge of that fact did not stay his wife's pen from this indictment :

“As for the King our husband,” Mary wrote, “God knows always our part towards him, and his behaviour and thankfulness to us are also known to God and the world ; especially our own indifferent subjects see it, and in their hearts, we doubt not, condemn the same.”

Almost on the same day another pen was busy reporting on the state of affairs in Scotland. This other chronicler was de Silva, the Spanish Ambassador in London, who wrote to Philip II. in this strain :

“The displeasure of the Queen of Scotland with her husband is carried so far, that she was approached by some who wanted to induce her to allow a plot to be formed against him, which she refused, but she nevertheless shows him no affection. They tell me even that she has tried to take away some of his servitors, and for some time past finds him no money for his ordinary expenditure. This is very unfortunate for them both, although it cannot be denied that the King has given grounds for it by what he has done. They ought to come to terms, as if they do not look out for themselves they are in a bad way.”

De Silva was not alone in hearing sinister rumours. They had crossed the English Channel, and were current in Paris; they had reached the ears of the faithful Archbishop Beaton, who promptly wrote to put Mary on her guard. He exhorted her to "take heed" of herself; "some surprise" was being prepared in her country; and, finally, "I would beseech your Majesty," he wrote, "to cause the captains of your guard to be diligent in their office, for I cannot be out of fear until I hear your news."

Three days prior to the penning of that warning letter, Mary set out at last on a visit to her sick husband. Bothwell had returned to Edinburgh, and accompanied the Queen on the first half of her journey. He went, in fact, as far as Falkirk, where, in Callender House, Mary broke her pilgrimage, and slept for the night. Bothwell tarried under the same roof. In his train he had a confidential servant, one Nicholas Hubert, whose nationality had won him the nickname of French Paris. He was with his master in his room when, late in the evening, Lady Reres entered, who, surprised that Bothwell was not alone, asked :

"What does Paris here?"

"It makes no difference," Bothwell replied.
"Paris will not say anything."

With that assurance, Lady Reres conducted Bothwell to the Queen's chamber.

On the following day Mary resumed her journey to Glasgow. Bothwell, however, set his face toward Edinburgh once more, bidding his servant

Paris accompany the Queen, who, he explained, would need his services in carrying letters. In the excitement of parting, Mary forgot to hand Bothwell a purse of some four hundred crowns, and Paris's first commission was to hurry after his master with the money. He soon overtook him, and, having discharged his errand, was bidden haste back to the Queen, and remain near her all the time.

News of Mary's coming had reached Darnley, and as he was still too weak to stir from his bed, he dispatched one of his gentlemen, Thomas Crawford by name, to meet her on the outskirts of Glasgow, and salute her in his name. Crawford was to make his master's excuses, and to add that he, Darnley, would not presume to desire the Queen's presence until he understood what she had meant by the sharp words she had spoken to one of his servants at Stirling. Mary received the message haughtily.

"There is no receipt against fear," she said, "and your master would not be afraid if he were not culpable."

"His lordship," Crawford boldly answered, "would that the secrets of every person's heart were written in his face."

"Have you any further commission?"

"No, madam."

"Then," Mary commanded, "hold your peace."

Throughout the journey the Queen had worn a preoccupied look, and seemed depressed, so much so that her attendants refrained from attempts to engage her in conversation. Shortly after the meeting with Crawford she arrived at Glasgow, but took

up her headquarters in a house some distance from that in which Darnley lay. Later in the day, however, she made her way to her husband's side.

Darnley and Mary had not seen each other for more than a month, and there were many things to discuss. Two records of their interview have survived—one from the pen of Mary herself, the other her husband's version. For when, several hours later, she left his chamber, the sick man called Crawford in, and dictated to him what he could remember of their conversation.

Mary's first words, he said, had been words of chiding for his complaining letters. He had answered that she would admit he had cause to complain when she knew all. And then, so Darnley bade Crawford write, he admitted he had done wrong.

“I confess”—thus spake the voice of the sick man—“that I have failed in some things, and yet you have forgiven greater faults in others. I am young, and you will say you have forgiven me many times. May not a man of my age for lack of counsel, of which I am very destitute fall twice or thrice, and yet repent and be chastened by experience? If I have done wrong, I crave your pardon, and protest that I will never fail again. I desire no other thing than that we may be together as husband and wife. If you will not consent, I wish I may never rise from this bed.”

Crawford's pen hurried on. It set down how Darnley had expressed his surprise that his wife had brought a litter with her, and how she explained

that its purpose was to carry him more softly than on horseback; how Mary promised to take him to Craigmillar, and be with him there while he recovered; how she gave her word that when he was purged of his sickness they should be together again at bed and board as husband and wife.

And when the record was written, Darnley and Crawford talked for a space. What did Crawford think of this proposed journey to Craigmillar? He liked it not; if his wife desired his company, why did she not promise to take him to her own house of Holyrood? In his opinion, Darnley was to be treated more like a prisoner than a husband. To which Darnley replied that he thought much the same himself.

“ Yet,” he added, “ I will put myself in her hands.”

Late that night, in the privacy of her chamber, Mary also took her pen in hand. She had much to tell Bothwell; thoughts and snatches of conversation hurried in upon her mind; her emotions were blended of hatred and shame and love. From such conditions nothing but a chaotic letter could result. The writer made no effort at order, but seized each thought as it arose, often doubling back on a theme, or interjecting now a curse on the man who was her husband, and anon an appeal for the love of the man to whom she wrote.

Much that Darnley had dictated to Crawford was set down also by Mary’s pen: his plea that he was young, his appeal for pardon, his promise never to offend again.

“ He would not let me go,” Mary continued, “ but

would have me to watch with him. I made as though I thought all to be true, and that I would think upon it, and have excused myself from sitting up with him. You never heard him speak better nor more humbly. . . . But fear not, for the purpose shall hold until death."

And then again :

"Cursed be this poxey fellow that troubleth me thus much, for I had a pleasanter matter to discourse unto you but for him. I thought I should have been killed with his breath, for it is worse than your uncle's breath, and yet I sat no nearer to him than in a chair by his bolster, and he lieth at the further side of the bed."

A little later the "pleasanter matter" came to recollection.

"I had forgotten," Mary's pen resumed, "of the Lord of Livingston, that he at supper said softly to the Lady Reres, that he drank to the persons I knew of, if I would pledge them. And after supper he said softly to me, while I was leaning upon him and warming myself: 'You may well go and see sick folk, yet can you not be so welcome to them, as you have this day left somebody in pain, who shall ne'er be merry till he hath seen you again.'"

Far on into the night Mary plied her pen. She was weary and sleepy, yet would scribble as long as her paper lasted. The exercise, too, was a relief from carking thought. All around her in the house were asleep; she would rather write seeing she could not, as she wished, "lie between your arms, my dear life."

Many matters were not clear to her. She was anxious to learn what Bothwell had decided upon, lest lack of knowledge on her part should mar their scheme ; she wrote so fully that he might know what was best to be done ; she would do whatsoever he commanded. "Send me word," she pleads again and again ; "send me word what I shall do"; and then, "think also if you cannot find some invention more secret by physic, for he is to take physic at Craigmillar."

Another mood asserted itself now and then. The voice of conscience could not be wholly muffled. "I am ill at ease," she wrote ; "I do here a work that I hate much ;" and then a prayer, "God forgive me!" Shame, too, was not absent. "Do not esteem me the less," she pleaded, "for you are the cause."

Nor was jealousy missing from the emotions which surged in Mary's heart during that midnight vigil with her pen. She could not forget that the man to whom she wrote was the husband of another.

"See not her," she cried, "whose feigned tears you ought not more to regard than the true travails which I endure to deserve her place, for the obtaining of which, against my nature, I do betray those that could let me. God forgive me, and give you, my only friend, the good luck and prosperity that your humble and faithful lover doth wish you."

Then, to make end, this impassioned appeal :

"Pray remember your friend, and write unto her, and often ; love me always as I shall love you."

Such was the letter with which Paris hurried back to Edinburgh. In addition he carried a verbal

message to Bothwell. Which would be the better, Mary bade him ask, to take the King to Craigmillar or to Kirk o' Field? And he was to hasten back, the Queen added, for she would not move from Glasgow until she received the reply.

Paris found Bothwell in his apartments at Holyrood, and duly delivered Mary's letter and message. But that day no answer was forthcoming. And the following morning, at eight, nine, and then ten o'clock, he attended at the palace for instructions. Bothwell was not to be found. Finally, however, a porter suggested that he might be at the Council, and Paris turned his steps in that direction. He happened upon him at last in the company of Sir James Balfour coming from Kirk o' Field, and, in reply to his request for an answer to the Queen's letter, Bothwell bade him return after dinner.

Attending once more in the afternoon, Paris waited while Bothwell wrote his answer.

"And commend me humbly to the Queen's favour," the earl said as he handed him the letter, "and say that all will be well; for Sir James Balfour and I have not slept all night, and have put all in order, and have ready the lodging."

In obedience to Bothwell's orders Paris, before starting on his return journey, waited also upon Maitland to inquire whether he had any message for the Queen. He had; and when he had written his letter, Paris remembered that he had forgotten to ask Bothwell whether the Queen was to take Darnley to Craigmillar or Kirk o' Field, so he put the question to Maitland.

“Kirk o’ Field will be best,” he answered; “and tell Her Majesty that Lord Bothwell and I have consulted together on that matter.”

Now Kirk o’ Field was on the extreme verge of Edinburgh town. A bird’s-eye view of the city drawn in those far-off years makes the situation clear. In the centre of the foreground is Calton Hill; on the extreme left and right respectively are Holyrood Palace and Edinburgh Castle; in the middle distance lie the huddled houses of the city grouped in an elongated oval; on the far horizon line stands the tower of Kirk o’ Field Church. It was literally the church in the fields. When erected two or three centuries earlier, the accessory buildings included a hospital, manses for the priests, and a more commodious structure known as the provost’s house. Now, however, thanks largely to the change of religion, the church was falling into ruins, and the provost’s house had stood empty for some years. Such as it was, that house at Kirk o’ Field had, some six weeks before, been bestowed by Mary on Robert Balfour, the brother of that Sir James Balfour who was keeping Bothwell close company in those January days of 1567.

Even for those rude days, and notwithstanding what improvements the all-night labours of Bothwell and his associate might effect, the provost’s house at Kirk o’ Field was a poor mansion for a King. A stone’s-throw distant stood the new town-house of the Duke of Châtelherault, a more fit abode for the Queen’s husband; but it was the decaying

provost's house Bothwell and Maitland both had in mind in their messages to Mary.

Its accommodation was exceedingly limited. On the ground floor were a cellar, a small hall, a kitchen, and another room ; on the upper and only other floor, which was reached by a spiral staircase, were a bedroom, a gallery, and another apartment. The largest room upstairs had been prepared for Darnley ; in the room immediately beneath Mary's small travelling-bed was placed. For the rest, the resources of Holyrood had furnished some tapestry for the hall and Darnley's chamber, a small Turkey carpet, two or three cushions, several chairs, and a little table covered with green velvet. A part of the tapestry had a rabbit-hunt for its theme.

While Paris was absent on his errand to Mary at Glasgow, Bothwell, his preliminary preparations at Kirk o' Field completed, made a journey to Dunbar Castle. He required some gunpowder, and at Dunbar there was ample store. His orders were that such-and-such a quantity was to be sent to his apartments at Holyrood.

Meanwhile Mary Stuart was growing impatient for news from Bothwell. Her only relief was to fly to her pen.

“It appears,” she wrote chidingly, “that with your absence there is also joined forgetfulness, seeing that when you left me you promised to advertise me your news from time to time.”

Not having heard anything from him, her purpose was to journey with “the man” towards Craigmillar on Monday. Darnley, she told Bothwell, as though

to sting him by jealousy, was making love to her; quickly adding, however, as though fearing the effect of such words, that she met all his advances by feigning a pain in her side.

“I pray you,” she concluded, “advertise me your news at length, and what I shall do. Provide for all things.”

Hardly could a courier have been dispatched with that epistle than Paris reached Glasgow again with his letters and verbal messages, including Maitland’s “Kirk o’ Field will be best.” Mary was now in full possession of all the instructions she needed, and with as little delay as possible the return journey to Edinburgh was begun, Darnley, of course, travelling in the litter, which would carry him “more softly” than horseback. He was, however, still so weak that the forty miles between the two cities had to be taken in easy stages. There was a halt of a night at Callender House, near Falkirk, where Mary received another letter from Bothwell and sent him a missive and a ring in reply, and a second rest at Linlithgow, whence the Queen sent two messengers—one being Paris—to Bothwell in Edinburgh. At the moment Paris arrived the earl was mounting his horse to go to meet Mary, and he returned with him on that errand, and remained in attendance until the cavalcade reached Kirk o’ Field. During the journey—so one chronicler averred—“a raven continually accompanied them from Glasgow to Edinburgh, where it frequently remained perched on the King’s lodging, and sometimes on the castle.”

Until the procession halted before the patched-up provost's house at Kirk o' Field, neither Darnley nor his servants had the least idea that that was their destination. That dread of Craigmillar which had been accentuated by the fears of Crawford had been made known to Mary, who, enlightened by her news from Bothwell, was able to humour the invalid to the extent of giving him the alternative of Kirk o' Field. Darnley, ignorant of the all-night labours of Bothwell and Balfour, naturally imagined his objective to be the new town-house of the Duke of Châtelherault—an impression which was so confidently shared by his servant, Thomas Nelson, that that retainer, on reaching Edinburgh, was making his way to the Duke's mansion as a matter of course until checked by the Queen, and by her directed to the provost's house.

As if to allay any suspicions he might have had, some of the keys of the building were ostentatiously handed to Nelson; the others, as he might see, were in the doors. With an exception. One of the outside doors, which gave entrance from the town wall into the cellar on the ground-floor, had no key; it was hunted for in vain, and at length a retainer of Bothwell's said it did not matter, as the door could be easily secured from the inside. On looking through the lodging, Nelson observed that Darnley's chamber had been hung with tapestry, and a "new bed of black figured velvet" put up.

By Saturday, the first day of February, then, Darnley and his modest retinue were duly installed

in the provost's house at Kirk o' Field. And life settled down into orderly routine.

Nothing of importance happened until the following Wednesday, when the Queen announced her intention of passing the night at Kirk o' Field. This involved the surrender by Nelson to one of Mary's servants of the key of the room directly under Darnley's chamber, and also the key of the outside door which opened into the garden. Mary also suggested an alteration of the plenishing of Darnley's room; that new couch of figured velvet would, she remarked, be "soiled by the bath," and consequently it was replaced by an "old purple bed." Then there was the bath itself—an unsightly object without a cover; wherefore the door of the downstairs passage was taken from its hinges, and utilized as a makeshift lid for the offending article. Mary spent the night not only of Wednesday, but also of Friday at Kirk o' Field.

Now on the Friday, earlier in the day, while Paris was attending to his duties at Kirk o' Field, he was joined by the Earl Bothwell, who, when the two were alone, asked his servant how matters went with him. Paris rejoined that, thanks to God and him, he esteemed himself in fortunate place, especially now that he had been made servant of the chamber to the Queen.

"That is not enough," Bothwell remarked; "I will do more for you yet."

"You shall want for nothing," the earl continued; "you have been a good and loyal servant." And then a moment later he added:

"Inasmuch as I have found thee a faithful servant, I wish to tell you one thing; but for fear of your life you must not let anyone know it."

Paris had no wish to learn so dangerous a secret, but Bothwell, ignoring his fears, went on:

"Do you know what it is," he said; "it is that this King, who has always his feet upon us other lords, is to be made to leap from this house into the air with powder."

Paris was stunned into silence.

"What do you think of it?" Bothwell at last asked.

"Very ill," Paris replied. It was a scheme, according to his poor mind, fraught with untold danger.

That same day, as Paris was putting up the bed in Mary's chamber at Kirk o' Field, and leaving it standing directly beneath the place occupied by Darnley's couch in the room above, Bothwell entered the room and commanded him to shift it to one side, "for," he said, "I intend putting the powder in that place."

For once Paris had the courage to disobey. His reward was, when the Queen entered the chamber, to be greeted with:

"Fool that thou art! I do not wish that my bed shall be in that place."

Startled into boldness, and thinking he might yet win a way of escape from the personal danger which threatened, Paris blurted out:

"Madam, the Earl Bothwell commanded me to carry the keys of your chamber to him, for that he

wishes to blow up the King with powder he will have put there."

"Don't speak to me about it at this hour," was Mary's only reply ; "make of it what you like."

An anxious vigil, then, was that Friday night for Mary Stuart. She stayed up late with Darnley, questioning him as to suspicions which had been awakened in his mind by the veiled warnings of a friend. And then, ere seeking her couch, she could not but relieve her mind in a letter to Bothwell. It was breaking her promise, she knew. Bothwell had urged her, and she had agreed, not to write ; but her purpose was not to offend. She was ill at ease for many reasons.

"If you knew the fear I have," so she wrote, "you would not have so many contrary suspicions in your thought, which, nevertheless, I cherish as arising from that thing I most desire and seek surely to have, which is your love."

And let him on his side prove his affection. His wife gave him not a third part of the faithful and willing obedience she bore him. For herself, Mary continued :

"I crave no other thing of God than that you may know the thing which is in my heart, which is yours, and that he may preserve you from all evil, at least so long as I have life, which I hold not precious, except in so far as both it and I are agreeable to you."

She was going to bed ; this was her good-night ; she would expect to hear from him in the morning ; let him watch lest "the bird escape out of the cage."

Paris carried the letter to Bothwell at Holyrood.



MARY STUART, QUEEN OF FRANCE AND SCOTLAND
AND
HENRY, LORD DARNLEY, HER HUSBAND.

Post
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The earl was already in bed, but he wrote a brief answer, adding the verbal message :

“Tell the Queen I shall not sleep until I have achieved my purpose, after which I will trail a pike all my days for love of her.”

Mary received the message in bed the next morning. It made her smile.

“Ah, well, Paris,” she said, “he will never come to that, please God.”

Bothwell’s plans were now taking a definite form. All along he had kept in view various alternatives. Poison was one: “some invention more secret by physic,” as Mary had suggested. The sword was another. Might not Darnley be enticed afield, and then, on pretence of a brawl, be incontinently slain ? Just at the eleventh hour, too, it appeared as though the victim himself might achieve his own death, for what would be easier than to face him in his own chamber with the one who had given him a veiled warning and sting the two into mortal combat then and there ? One by one, however, these alternatives were abandoned.

And now Bothwell, immune, as he thought, from any interference by the most powerful nobles by virtue of the bond they had signed, cast about him for a few active co-workers in carrying out the plot. His menial servant, Paris, he could command ; his mere word, too, would be sufficient in the case of his porters, William Powrie and Pat Wilson, or his valet, George Dalgleish. But in addition to these he needed the assistance of two or three more nearly in his own rank. And then he bethought him of

three of his gentlemen retainers, young men of spirit who had proved their mettle by his side in many a daring enterprise—John Hay, the Laird of Tallo; John Hepburn, and James Ormeston, the Laird of Ormeston.

Summoning the first to his private chamber in Holyrood, Bothwell boldly broached his purpose.

“John,” he said, “this is the matter; the King’s destruction is planned, and I must reveal it to you as to my friend, and if you reveal it again, it will be my destruction, and I will seek thy life first.”

Hay accepted the situation as inevitable, and duly gave his promise to assist in the enterprise.

And the same evening John Hepburn and James Ormeston were acquainted with the secret. Hepburn thought it was an evil purpose, but because he was Bothwell’s retainer and cousin-german he could not withhold his help.

Ormeston was more difficult to win.

“God forbid,” he ejaculated; “but if it were in battle, I would fight by your side unto death.”

“Tush, Ormeston,” Bothwell rejoined, “you need take no fear of this, for all the lords agreed upon the matter long since at Craigmillar, and none dare find fault when it is done.”

Saturday the 8th of February, 1567, was a day of keen mental anguish to at least two men who were acquainted with the plot. When Ormeston returned to his lodgings on Friday evening he at once took to his bed, and there he remained all through Saturday and Sunday, feigning sickness. But Paris was not altogether master of his own coming and going.

He had duties to perform at Kirk o' Field, which he attended to with a heavy heart, puzzling his brain the while how he might save his own skin in the impending catastrophe. When he was at length free for an hour or two, he wandered, as in a dream, in the direction of Leith, thinking he might find there a ship in which to escape. But when half-way to the shore, the stark fatalism of his position asserted itself: he had neither passport nor power to charter a boat, and even had he both the wind might not serve.

Early the next morning, Sunday, so early, six o'clock, that it was yet dark when he rose from his uneasy bed, Paris wandered out in the meadows round Holyrood, and, lighting upon a little secluded hollow, knelt on the cold ground in the icy winter morning air, and prayed for Divine guidance in his sore perplexity. Three hours later he was to learn that the Earl of Moray could be his own providence. For at nine o'clock that Sunday morning, as he was on his way to church, that nobleman was accosted in the street—no doubt through his own contriving—by a messenger from his wife at St. Andrews. She was in the pangs of childbirth, and besought him to speed to her side. Hurrying back to Holyrood to take leave of the Queen, he was urged by her to postpone his journey till the morrow.

“For,” Mary argued, “your lady will either be well before you can come there, or at least your journey will not hasten the birth.”

But Moray was not to be persuaded; his preparations were quickly made and his departure taken.

From dawn to dusk that day, so legend avers, the raven which had accompanied Darnley on his journey from Glasgow, perched on the gable of Kirk o' Field and croaked continually.

Dusk closed in early on that winter Sunday. At four o'clock in the afternoon Bothwell held another council with John Hay and John Hepburn, the three remaining in close conference in the earl's most private chamber for the space of a couple of hours. When they separated the final details had been arranged ; but, as James Ormeston had not put in an appearance, it was decided that he should be visited at his lodgings later in the evening.

Between six and seven o'clock Bothwell joined the retinue of the Queen, passing with her to John Balfour's house, where a banquet was given by the Bishop of Argyle. The meal was not of long duration ; by eight o'clock the company broke up, and Mary, attended by the Earls Huntly and Argyle, proceeded to Kirk o' Field on a visit to her husband. Bothwell dropped out of the train to join Hay and Hepburn, with whom he walked to Ormeston's lodgings, where the missing retainer was found and made to join the band.

While Bothwell, Hay, and Ormeston made their way to Kirk o' Field, Hepburn proceeded to Holyrood and called for the earl's porters, William Powrie and Pat Wilson, to whom, in their master's private chamber, he pointed out a heavy trunk and a leather bag. They were to take them with all speed to the Blackfriars Gate at Kirk o' Field, carrying thither

also a large empty powder-barrel. The trunk and bag and barrel were so heavy and cumbersome that Powrie and Wilson were obliged to make a couple of journeys with their pack-horse; but the distance was not great, and they were soon on their way with their last load.

Both were suspicious.

"Jesu, Pat," whispered Powrie, "what gait is this we are going? I trow it be not good."

"I trow it be not good," Wilson rejoined; "but, whist! hold your tongue."

At the Blackfriars Gate of Kirk o' Field there waited a little band, consisting of Bothwell, Hay, Hepburn, Ormeston, and Paris, to whom, inside the gate, Powrie and Wilson delivered their burdens. Trunk and bag were at once opened, disclosing many pokes of gunpowder. Each of the band shouldered or took under his arm one of the pouches, and the procession wended its way to the garden gate of Kirk o' Field. Farther than that Powrie and Wilson were not allowed to go; at that gate, close to the dwelling where Mary Stuart sat by Darnley's side in the upstair room, Hay, Hepburn and Ormeston took charge of the pokes and bore them one by one to their destination. Powrie meanwhile was sent to buy sixpennyworth of candles, and when he returned all the powder had disappeared. There was nothing more for him and Wilson to do save carry back to Holyrood the empty trunk and leather bag. The two made a leisurely return journey, and ere they reached their destination they caught a distant glimpse of the Queen

walking towards her palace in the midst of a group of torch-bearers.

But much had happened in the interval. Bothwell had joined Mary in Darnley's chamber, and challenged Argyle to a game of dice, leaving his retainers to complete the preparations in the room beneath. Several difficulties had not been foreseen ; the barrel in which it had been proposed to place the powder was too large to pass the doorway, and most of the conspirators professed ignorance as to how the train should be laid. The problem of how to dispose the powder was solved by pouring it into a heap directly under the spot where Darnley's bed stood in the room above ; the puzzle about firing the train was unravelled by Ormeston.

"Take a piece of lunt," he explained, "three or four inches long, and kindle the end of it, and lay that to the cold end, and it will burn to the train, and so will blow up."

While these preparations were in hand, Bothwell slipped downstairs for a moment. They were making too much noise, he said, adding :

"Haste before the Queen comes forth, for if she departs before you are ready, the opportunity will be spoiled."

In a few minutes all was finished. The powder lay piled high in an ominous heap ; into one side was thrust a hollowed piece of wood holding the train ; the lunt was prepared and placed in position ; and John Hay and John Hepburn had nerved themselves for the long vigil they must keep ere it was time to light the match.

"You know now," Ormeston whispered, "what you have to do when all is quiet above; fire the end of the lunt, and come away."

Upstairs the evening had passed pleasantly for Darnley. Not for many a day had his wife seemed in so merry, so affectionate, a mood. Bothwell and Argyle played their game of dice, Huntly and Mary now looking on or turning to bandy words with the invalid. By-and-by Paris entered and whispered in Bothwell's ear. The Queen understood the signal, and, starting up in haste, declared that she had almost forgotten her promise to attend the masque at Holyrood in honour of the wedding of her servants, Sebastian and Mary Cawood; she must hurry to the palace at once. Then, bending over Darnley for a moment, she embraced him and gave him a ring, but almost her last words ere leaving the chamber were:

"It is nearly a year ago since Rizzio was slain."

Outside, the Queen's torch-bearers waited, and in another moment she and Bothwell and the other lords took their place in their midst, and moved off towards Holyrood. The flickering lights below shone for a second or two into Darnley's chamber, and then gradually grew dim and faded away.

At Holyrood the masque for Sebastian and Mary Cawood was at its height, but the hour was late, and at midnight Mary retired to her couch. Bothwell withdrew to his chamber at the same time, but, instead of seeking his bed, he called for his valet, George Dalgleish, to help him change the handsome hose of black velvet and the doublet of black satin which he had worn all the evening for garments of

coarser quality. Then, casting around him a dark riding-cloak, he summoned Paris and Powrie and Wilson, and went out into the night.

After Mary's departure from Kirk o' Field, Darnley relapsed into a mood of depression. He had no one of rank for company ; in the rooms near his own chamber were a couple of servants and a page ; in immediate attendance on his own person was his valet, William Taylor. It was to the latter he opened his mind. Having been confined to bed for so long, the approach of the midnight hour found him still wakeful, and he filled in the slow-moving minutes by recounting to his servant many of the speeches which had passed between him and the Queen that evening, dwelling hopefully on such of her words as promised him restoration to her affection.

" Yet," he added mournfully, " the mention of Rizzio's slaughter seemed uncalled for, and marred all."

And then he asked for his Bible, and, turning to the Fifty-fifth Psalm, read aloud the poignant appeals and forebodings of the Hebrew poet :

" Give ear to my prayer, O God ; and hide not Thyself from my supplication.

" My heart is sore pained within me : and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.

" Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.

" And I said, Oh, that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away and be at rest.

" Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongue : for I have seen violence and strife in the city.

"Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.

"Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

"For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then could I have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then would I have hid myself from him.

"But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine own familiar friend."

And so the voice of the reader ceased, and the midnight silence filled his chamber as Darnley composed himself to sleep. Two months past he had attained only his twenty-first year, but he had looked his last upon the light of day.

For in the chamber beneath Hay and Hepburn were keeping their silent vigil beside the grim heap of death, and from Holyrood Palace Bothwell was on his way to see that "the bird escaped not from its cage." On through the quiet and deserted streets the earl and his servants walked, only to find their progress barred by the closed gate at the Netherbow Port of the city walls. At his master's bidding, Wilson roused the gatekeeper, who drowsily asked what they did out of their beds at that time of night, but let them through. Almost coincident with the arrival of Bothwell at Kirk o' Field, sounds of movement in Darnley's chamber ceased. This was the hour for which Hay and Hepburn had waited so long, and without further delay they lit the train of the gunpowder, and passed silently into the garden.

Bothwell was waiting there, impatient to learn whether they had fired the match.

So slowly did the train burn, so many minutes went heavily by without a sound, that Bothwell grew angry, and demanded whether there were not a window through which he might see that nothing was amiss.

“For,” he muttered, “I will not go away until I see it done.”

Even as he spoke, the slow-burning match had reached the powder. There was a roaring blast, as though thirty cannon had spoken in one breath, a lurid sheet of flame which lit up Kirk o’ Field as with noontide fulgence, a hurtling of stones and timber in the air, and then black darkness and silence.

And, fifty paces distant, in an adjacent garden, lay the body of Darnley, naked and dead.

CHAPTER II

THE TRIAL

MARY STUART was once more a widow. When the echoes of the blast died away, there was heard the lament: "The King is dead, oh, luckless night!" For although it was two hours after midnight when Darnley's lodging was rent asunder, there were some besides Bothwell and his band who had not sought their beds. Certain women, so ran the stories of the time, were watching Kirk o' Field from their windows, and one told how she heard Darnley make the pathetic appeal: "O my brothers, have pity on me for the love of Him who had mercy on all the world."

Another reported that it was a servant of the murdered man who wailed,

"The King is dead, oh, luckless night!"

Even the conspirators were startled by the force and roar of the explosion. To French Paris it seemed like a "tempest of thundering." He fell to the ground in terror, exclaiming: "Alas, sir, what is that?" To which Bothwell made answer:

"I have been in some great enterprises, but never one which gave me such great fear as this."

All Edinburgh citizens save these few had long

been wrapt in slumber. It was winter, and two hours past midnight. In Holyrood Palace and humble tenement alike, the lights of the Sabbath evening had long been extinguished. Sentries kept their lonely vigil at palace and castle gates, but within and without there brooded darkness and silence and desolation.

But that unwonted salvo broke the repose of many a sleeper. As a chronicler of the time recorded, "the blast was fearful to all about; many rose from their beds at the noise."

Later in the day a May Crockett told how she was lying quietly between her "twa twynnies" when the "cruk rais," and how at first she thought the house above was falling about her ears, and how, leaving the twins to their fate, she ran to the door in her "sark allane." Even as she reached the door she noticed a band of men hurrying by. But to her eager question as to where the "cruk" was, they gave no answer. Ere they could all pass by, however, she clutched at the cloak of one and recognized that it was of silk.

Another woman, Barbara Martin by name, also narrated how from her window, after the explosion, she saw a band of men hastening down the street, two of them arrayed in showy garments. She cried on them as they passed, called them "traitors," and exclaimed that they had been at some "evil turn"; but they hurried on in silence, and were soon hidden in the darkness of the night.

Bothwell and his band, indeed, were in no mood to answer inconvenient questions. With their heads

muffled in their cloaks, they sped along the deserted streets, keeping close to the shadow of the houses, and tarried not until they reached the Netherbow Gate. Here their progress was barred until the porter was awakened and let them through, when they proclaimed themselves "friends of my Lord Bothwell." Darting onward once more, they met with no further challenge until halted by the sentinels at Holyrood.

"Who are you?" queried the guards.

"Friends of my Lord Bothwell."

"What crack was that?"

"We know not."

"If you are friends of my Lord Bothwell, go your way."

As soon as he gained the privacy of his own room, Bothwell called for a drink, and then, throwing off his disguising cloak and under-vestment, cast himself on his bed.

But, even had he not murdered sleep for that night, his repose was to be brief. Half an hour later there came a loud knocking at the door, and a terror-stricken cry of "Let me in, let me in!" The knocker was one George Hacket, a servant of the Court, who, on gaining admission, was for a few minutes too agitated to utter a word.

"What is the matter, man?" exclaimed Bothwell; "speak!"

"The King's house is blown up," Hacket at last muttered, "and I trow the King be slain."

And now it was the earl's turn to be astonished.

"Fie! Treason!" he cried.

And starting up from his bed, he at once began arraying himself in the black velvet hose and doublet of black satin which he had worn in Mary's company the previous night. Even as he was so occupied he was joined by Huntly, and in a little the two made their way to the Queen's apartments.

Not until then did Mary suspect she was a widow. Unless, indeed, that dark story was true which made her, disguised as a man, one of Bothwell's companions at Kirk o' Field. The sentries at Holyrood had heard the blast which sent Darnley to his death, but the mistress of Holyrood had slept on undisturbed. Such, at any rate, is the impression conveyed not only by the confused records of the time, but also by Mary's first letter after the event.

How Bothwell and Huntly broke the news, and how it was received, we shall never know; neither of the three ever spoke or wrote a word of what passed at that early morning interview. Unless others were present, there was no need for that simulation of astonishment with which Bothwell received George Hacket's message. But if, as was likely, Mary was not alone, the earls may have contented themselves with a bald report that some accident had happened at Kirk o' Field and a promise to investigate the matter without delay.

Most of the actors in the previous night's tragedy were early astir in Holyrood Palace on that morning of Monday, February 10th, 1567. When French Paris sought Bothwell's chamber soon after seven o'clock he found Ormeston and Hepburn

already there. Paris betrayed his feelings by his looks.

"What have you to make you so miserable?" Bothwell asked.

"Alas, sir," he answered, "I have that which neither gold nor silver can make me what I once was."

"Why?"

"Because, sir, I know well that I shall be taken for the principal of this act."

Bothwell laughed.

"Yes," he returned in a tone of sarcasm, "you are in truth the one man I should suspect of such a deed."

"See these gentlemen," he continued, pointing to Ormeston and Hepburn; "they have estates, rents, wives, and children, and have willingly risked all to do me service."

Meanwhile Bothwell assumed the direction of affairs in the palace. He led a party of soldiers to Kirk o' Field, set a guard over the ruin, and had Darnley's body removed to a neighbouring house. For multitudes had gathered there since early dawn to gaze upon Darnley's corpse and speculate on his untoward end. And the magistrates of Edinburgh, as one historian affirmed, hurried to the scene and began searching the city for suspicious people. "They found only one," added that chronicler; "Captain Blakater, who had been drinking wine in William Henderson's house at the Tron, who, at the noise of the crack, ran out and left the wine undrunk."

On his journey back to Holyrood from Kirk o'

Field, Bothwell devised an ingenious theory to account for Darnley's death. Meeting Sir James Melville in the palace, he said :

" I have seen the strangest accident that ever happened, to wit, the thunder came out of the sky, and has burnt the King's house, and he has been found lying dead a little distance from the house under a tree. Go up and see him ; there is not a hurt nor a mark in all his body."

But second thoughts supervened. Bothwell seems to have abandoned the thunderbolt theory as quickly as he conceived it, and as speedily repented his invitation to Melville to view the body. For when Melville went to Kirk o' Field the soldiers refused him permission to examine the corpse. Moretta, too, the Ambassador of the Duke of Savoy, had a similar experience, for he also was denied admission to the house where Darnley's body lay.

How Darnley met his death was a mystery. From the gossip of those who handled his body there emerges the one incontroverted fact that it bore no marks of violence or trace of the action of fire ; nay, even his clothes, which were lying near, were unsinged and untumbled. Hence arose the legend that, before the house was blown up, he had been strangled, with his own garters or with a napkin soaked in vinegar, and then carried out into the garden. But two facts were patent to all—Kirk o' Field was in ruins, and the King was dead.

And what of Mary herself? The faithful Melville, he who had been her page in happier days in France, did not see her on that fateful Monday, but

Bothwell vouchsafed him the information that she was "sorrowful and quiet." French Paris, however, was more favoured. He gained admission to the Queen's bedchamber between nine and ten that morning, noted that the bed was already hung with black, that the windows were closely curtained, and that by candle-light one of the ladies of the Court was serving Mary with an egg for her breakfast. Bothwell, too, entered the room for a moment, held a whispered conversation with the Queen, and was gone.

Later in the day Thomas Nelson, one of Darnley's servants who had survived the explosion, was questioned as to what he knew of the catastrophe. Who, he was asked, had the keys of Kirk o' Field? One Bonkle, he answered, had the key of the cellar, but the keys of the Queen's chamber were in the hands of her own servants. "Hold, there," ejaculated one of the questioners, "here is a ground!" After which words, Nelson added, "they left off and proceeded no further with the inquisition."

Ere the day closed, however, two letters were dispatched to France from Holyrood. The first of these, drafted, no doubt, by the subtle Maitland, and signed by Bothwell, Argyle, Huntly, the Bishops of Ross and Galloway, and two or three more, was addressed to the Queen Regent of France, and told briefly of the "strange fortune" which had happened in Edinburgh the previous night. This official message from the Council laid stress upon the utter demolition of Darnley's lodging, hazarded the theory that the plot had been aimed at Mary herself, and

expressed gratitude to the Divine Providence that the Queen had been spared to take vengeance on the assassins.

"We are making inquiries," the missive continued, "and we do not doubt that shortly we shall find out who are the perpetrators; for God will never permit that such a wickedness remain hidden or unpunished."

Mary herself was the other scribe. Her letter was partly in answer to one she said she had received that morning, the writer being James Beaton, Archbishop of Glasgow, her loyal Ambassador at the Court of France. Certainly it was a letter which demanded speedy acknowledgment, and as it had been written at Paris on the 27th of January it should have reached Mary's hands before the 10th of February; for twelve days was the average time of letter transit between Paris and Edinburgh in the sixteenth century. But Beaton had good reason for hastening his messenger to Mary Stuart; he had serious warnings to give her, and hence it is at least probable that his letter actually reached Holyrood before the 10th of February.

It was not, however, until the afternoon of that day that Mary spread Beaton's letter open before her and proceeded to pen her answer.

What did she read therein?

"... For none of the preceding matters had I thought to have dispatched expressly to your Majesty, if the Ambassador of Spain had not required me to do so, and specially to advertise you to *take heed to yourself*. I have heard some murmur-

ing likewise through others, that there be some surprise to be trafficked in your country, but he would never let me know any particulars, only assuring me that he had written to his master to know if by that way he could try any further, and was advertised and counselled to cause me haste toward you herewith."

Beaton had even spoken earnestly to the Queen Regent, who, however, assured him that she knew nothing dangerous in the affairs of his mistress, save "the variance between you and the King." But his mind was ill at ease.

"I would beseech your Majesty," he concluded, "to cause the captains of your guard to be diligent in their office, for I cannot be out of fear until I hear your news."

Such was the letter which Mary Stuart had to answer. And her "news" would be a strange confirmation of Beaton's ominous warning.

She had received, she wrote, his letter of the 27th of January, which contained in one part such advertisement as she had found over-true.

"Albeit," she continued, "the success has not altogether been such as the authors of that mischievous fact had preconceived in their minds, and had put it in execution, if God in His mercy had not preserved us, and reserved us, as we trust, to the end that we may take a rigorous vengeance of that mischievous deed, which, or it should remain unpunished, we had rather lose life and all. The matter is horrible and so strange as we believe the like was never heard of in any country. This night

past, being the 9th of February, a little after two hours after midnight, the house wherein the King was lodged was in an instant blown in the air—he lying sleeping in his bed—with such a vehemence that of the whole lodging, walls and other, there is nothing remained: no, not a stone above another, but all either carried far away, or dung in dross to the very ground-stone. It must be done by force of powder, and appears to have been a mine. By whom it has been done, or in what manner, it appears not as yet. We doubt not but, according to the diligence our Council has begun already to use, the certainty of all shall be declared shortly; and the same being discovered, which we wot God will never suffer to lie hid, we hope to punish the same with such rigour as shall serve for example of this cruelty to all ages to come. Always, whoever have taken this wicked enterprise in hand, we assure ourself it was designed as well for us as for the King; for we lay the most part of all the last week in that same lodging, and was there accompanied with the most part of the lords that are in this town that same night at midnight, and of very chance tarried not all night, by reason of some masque in the abbey; but we believe it was not chance, but God that put it in our head."

Both the letters to France, then, were in perfect accord. The official report of the Council and the personal missive of Mary corresponded exactly in their report of the explosion; they were at one in hinting that the assassins had aimed at Mary's life as well as Darnley's; they each expressed gratitude

that the Queen had been spared to take summary vengeance on the culprits; they echoed each other in the promise of speedy action; and they were alike barren of any word of pity for the unhappy victim of the plot.

Perhaps it did not escape observation at the French Court that most of those who signed the letter from the Council were "friends of my Lord Bothwell"; but there was no one at Paris who knew that the only lords who accompanied Mary to Kirk o' Field were Argyle and Huntly and Bothwell, and that instead of having slept "the most part of all last week" at Kirk o' Field, she had lain there but two nights.

When the next day dawned French Paris was still unable to control his tell-tale looks.

"What is the matter, Paris?" Mary asked him, as he moved about her chamber.

"Alas! madam," he answered, "I see that everyone looks upon me with suspicion."

"Don't worry yourself," the Queen rejoined. "I will make you look more cheerful, and no one will be able to say a word to you."

There were others of the band, too, who were ill at ease—Ormeston, and Hepburn, and Hay, and Bothwell's servants. They all met in the earl's chamber in the evening, and he comforted them as best he could.

"Keep your tongues close," he said, "and you shall never want as long as I have anything."

During the day several women were examined by Huntly, including the May Crockett and Barbara

Martin already mentioned, and a surgeon named Pitcairn, who, however, proved a sterile witness, for he neither heard nor knew anything until some two hours after the explosion. And so the second day passed with nothing effected.

But on Wednesday, the third day after the murder, an official proclamation was at last posted on the door of the Tolbooth. In its exordium that document was copied almost word for word from the letters of the Council and Mary—there are the same phrases about Kirk o' Field being “dung in dross to the very ground-stone,” and the determination of the Queen to “rather lose life and all” than suffer the crime to lie hid—and then followed the important matter:

“Wherefore Her Majesty, with the advice of her secret Council, has statued, ordained, and decreed, that whosoever will first reveal the persons, devisers, counsellers, or actual committers of the said mischievous and treasonable murder, to the effect that they may be duly punished therefor—the first revealer, as said is, although he be culpable and participant of the said crime—shall have free pardon and remit, whereunto this present act and ordinance shall be sufficient warrant to him; and besides that, shall be honestly rewarded and recompensed to the lasting weal of him and his posterity; at least shall have two thousand pounds money, and be provided of an honest yearly rent at the sight of Her Majesty and her Council; and ordains Lyon, King of Arms, his brother heralds and macers, and all other officers, to make publication hereof by open proclamation at

the market-cross of Edinburgh, and all other places needful."

Meanwhile, what of the dead Darnley? All this time his body had lain, neglected save for a soldier on guard, in a humble house at Kirk o' Field. Now, however, something was done towards preparing it for the grave; for in the treasurer's account for Wednesday an entry was made bearing that forty pounds had been paid to one Martin Picauet, an apothecary, for the drugs and spices and other ingredients necessary for embalming the King's body, and a further sum of two pounds six shillings was paid the same day for the tubs, barrels, etc., used in embowelling the corpse.

No royal ceremony attended the dead King's progress toward Holyrood Chapel; instead, he was carried thither on a rough plank by a company of soldiers. Legend avers that Mary Stuart gazed upon her dead husband's form without emotion; nay, one historian credited her with viewing the body with "greedy eyes." And when, three days later, it was committed to the grave at nightfall, the mourners included only two minor officials of the Court. "The ceremonies indeed were the fewer," explained one of the Queen's apologists, "because the greater part of the Council were Protestants." But Mary was a Catholic and still Sovereign of Scotland, and the paltry manner of Darnley's obsequies was to be recalled to her discredit not many days later. It is true she ordered a Mass to be sung for the repose of Darnley's soul, but that was six weeks later.

Among the records of those baleful days, however, there is one which has a sinister significance. Moretta, the Duke of Savoy's Ambassador, was, it will be remembered, in Edinburgh at the time of the tragedy, and soon after set out on his return journey. Passing through London he had several interviews with de Silva, the Spanish Ambassador there, and de Silva duly reported those interviews to his master. Now it must be remembered that all these—Moretta, de Silva, and the King of Spain—were staunch Catholics, and hence had every inducement to put the most favourable construction on the doings of their co-religionist, the Queen of Scots; and the value of Moretta's impressions is enhanced by the fact that at the time he received them no charges had been formulated against Mary.

Yet this is what de Silva reported:

“Moretta, the Duke of Savoy's man, returned hither five days ago. He left Edinburgh a day and a half after the death of the King, and his account of the matter is almost the same as that published and written to your Majesty, although he makes certain additions, which point to suspicion that the Queen knew of, or consented to the plot. When I asked him what he thought, or had been able to gather as to the Queen's share in it, he did not condemn her in words, but did not exonerate her at all. He thinks, however, that all will soon be known, and even gives signs that he knows more than he likes to say.”

Nor was that all. De Silva added to the same letter:

“Every day it becomes clearer that the Queen of Scotland must take steps to prove that she had no hand in the death of her husband, if she is to prosper in her claims to the succession here. The spirit of the Catholics has been greatly weakened by this event.”

De Silva’s master could hardly have been surprised to read those words. Not only had he been long aware of the plot against Darnley, but his Ambassador had a week before sent him this message from London :

“Lady Margaret (Darnley’s mother) is not the only person that suspects the Queen to have had some hand in the business, and they think they see in it revenge for her Italian secretary ; and the long estrangement which this caused between her and her husband gave a greater opportunity for evil persons to increase the trouble.”

But to return to Edinburgh.

On the day which was to witness the furtive obsequies of Darnley a messenger was dispatched to the English Court. Robert Melville, brother to the faithful Sir James, was chosen for the task of reporting to Queen Elizabeth the late happenings in the Scottish capital ; and that he might gain more favour with the English Sovereign he was instructed to say that Mary was now willing to ratify the Treaty of Leith. That treaty, it will be recalled, had been for some years the chief obstacle to the friendship of the two Queens. Mary had stoutly refused to set her hand to it, because by so doing she would have signed away her claim on the English throne ; but

now, so anxious was she, apparently, to stand well with Elizabeth, she of her own initiation offered to make the great surrender.

And it was on the day when Robert Melville set out for England that Mary granted to Bothwell the superiority of the town of Leith. This meant a great accession to his already considerable power, for as superior of Leith he would have practically royal command over the chief port of the kingdom, and large prestige with the citizens of Edinburgh.

Save as controlling these official acts, the figure of the widowed Queen makes but a shadowy appearance in the latter days of the week which now came to an end. When Robert Melville left Edinburgh that Saturday, he was assured by Mary that she would not leave her chamber until her forty days' mourning were ended. A less reliable authority has since assured the world that the apartments to which she retired were minus comfort, and "without the light of the sun, without air!" Mary, however, did not remain for long in that terrible vacuum. Not her "forty days" by any means. And for palliation of her breaking the resolve she mentioned to Robert Melville, what could have been more convincing than the plea urged by her resourceful advocate, the Bishop of Ross? "Kings might be mourned in that way," wrote the ingenious Leslie, "but Darnley was only a King by courtesy; he was a subject, and took his honour from his wife, and therefore Her Grace mourned after another sort."

She did. Eleven miles east of Edinburgh lay the palace of Seton, the chief seat of the lord of that

name—a pleasant and retired mansion, where she had spent her honeymoon with Darnley. What more suitable as a retreat from a city of such ghostly memories as Edinburgh? Thither, then, Mary Stuart journeyed on Sunday, with Bothwell and Huntly in her train. And it was at Seton she spent many days of the ensuing weeks, returning to Edinburgh now and then as occasion seemed to demand.

And at Seton she truly mourned “after another sort.” Letters of the day told how my Lord Seton considerately gave up the whole of his house to the Queen and her party; how she and Bothwell recreated themselves by shooting at the butts; how once there was a dinner at the near-by Tranent, paid for by the losers of a wager; and, finally, how the gates at Seton were “straightly kept.” In those days, too, the scholarly Maitland—who was also of the party—is found writing to Cecil in England that he would give his servant permission to bring back to Scotland some four or five dozen sporting bows for the “summer pastime” of himself and friends.

But not all the pastimes and dinner-parties at Seton could wholly obliterate the memory of that lurid tragedy at Kirk o’ Field. The scene haunted Bothwell.

“What thought you,” he asked of Hay, “when you saw him blown in the air?”

“Alas, my lord!” replied Hay with a shudder, “why speak you of that? Whenever I hear such a thing, the words wound me to death, as they ought to do you.”

Hardly had Mary and Bothwell left Edinburgh than the citizens were provided with a new sensation. Since Wednesday the proclamation of the Council offering a reward of two thousand pounds for the discovery of the murderers had been displayed on the door of the Tolbooth. Before that building, then,—a new structure completed some three years earlier, which served as a Parliament-house and a court of justice—there had often gathered little groups to read or hear read the Council's offer of largess and pardon. Four days had passed, and none had come forward to claim the prize. And now it was the Sabbath once more, and in the early hours of that day, when the street was deserted, a man stole forward, and quickly posted another placard by the side of the official bill.

This, then, was what the citizens read when, a few hours later, they passed the Tolbooth on their way to Divine service in St. Giles's Church :

“ Because proclamation is made that whosoever will reveal the murderers of the King shall have two thousand pounds, I, who have made inquisition by them that were the doers thereof, affirm that the committers of it were the Earl Bothwell, James Balfour, the Parson of Flisk, David Chambers, black John Spence, who was the principal deviser of the murder, and the Queen assenting thereto, through the persuasion of the Earl Bothwell, and the witchcraft of the Lady Buccleuch.”

A startling placard, truly. The preacher in St. Giles's that day would have little power to arrest the wandering thoughts of his audience. The sus-

pictions which many had whispered to each other for several days past had been set down in black and white, and could now be discussed freely. And someone in authority so speedily realized the serious nature of the anonymous accuser's bill that ere the day ended another document was affixed to the Tolbooth door.

Let the setter up of that bill, so the new order ran, come forward and avow himself before the Queen and Council, and he should then be rewarded with the sum promised in the first proclamation.

But the anonymous placarder hesitated. He required a guarantee of the Council's good faith. Despite the vigilance, then, of Bothwell's servants, he contrived to post up another bill on the Tolbooth door.

"Forasmuch," it read, "as proclamation has been made for the setting up of my first letter, desiring me to subscribe and avow the same; for answer, I desire the money to be consigned into an honest man's hand, and I shall appear on Sunday next, with some four with me, and subscribe my first letter, and abide thereto. And further, I desire that Signior Francis, Bastian, and Joseph, the Queen's goldsmith, be stayed, and I shall declare what every man did in particular, with their accomplices."

To that document no answer was made.

Not that it and its predecessor had been without effect. One of the first to learn the contents of those accusing bills was Ormeston, who at once sought an interview with Bothwell.

"What devil is this now, my lord," he asked,

“that everybody suspects you of this deed, and few or none other spoken of but you? Another thing you said to me.”

“I will let you see something that I have,” Bothwell replied.

And then he produced the Craigmillar bond for Darnley's death, pointed to the signatures of Argyle and Huntly and Maitland, and added :

“There are many more who will assist me if I am attacked.”

And now the Earl of Lennox, the father of the murdered Darnley, appears upon the scene. He was in Scotland, residing at either his Glasgow or Houston house, and within half a day's journey of Edinburgh, but was apparently neither invited to see his son's dead body nor to attend his funeral. Or, if invited, he concluded that he was safer at a distance. It is by letter, then, and not in person, that he becomes an actor in the tragedy.

Naturally his letters were addressed to his son's widow, and the answers were made as naturally by Mary herself. The Queen's first epistle is lost, and the first from Lennox is dated the 20th of February —ten days after the murder.

Grief and nature and duty, he wrote, forced him to be bold in giving Her Majesty his poor and simple advice for the discovery of the murderers. Which was, he continued, to beseech the Queen, for God's cause and the honour of her realm, to hasten the assembly of her nobility and estates to take “good order for the perfect trial of the matter.” Her Majesty

would pardon his urgency, he said, seeing that he was "father to him that is gone."

Now it so happened that while Lennox was writing, commands had been issued in the Queen's name for a Parliament to be held in Edinburgh on the 14th of April, the said Parliament, however, having been arranged for prior to the preceding Christmas, and hence some weeks before Darnley's death. In her reply to Lennox, then, Mary seized upon the fortunate coincidence, and told him how she had already proclaimed a Parliament at which the matter of the King's murder should have precedence over all other business.

If Mary was content to wait another seven weeks, Lennox was not. With a touch of sarcasm he hinted she must think the time "as long" as he did till the matter be tried ; as for a Parliament, that was weeks distant. Besides, murder was not a Parliament subject, but of such "weight and importance" that it ought to be sought out with "all expedition and diligence." He could not understand the Queen's lethargy. Had she not heard of the bills on the door of the Tolbooth and the names they contained ?

"I shall therefore," Lennox continued, "most humbly beseech your Majesty, for the love of God, the honour of your Majesty and your realm, and weal and quietness of the same, that it will please your Majesty forthwith, not only to apprehend and put in sure keeping the persons named in the said bills, but also with diligence to assembly your Majesty's nobility, and then, by open proclamation, to admonish the writers of the said bills to appear."

Mary's reply must have astonished her father-in-law. It was not her meaning, she said, that the trial of Darnley's murderers should be remitted to the Parliament. She was anxious that they should be "suddenly and without delay" brought to justice; but it would be difficult to convene the nobility before the time stated. And then as to the names on the bills—really, there were so many bills and so many names that she did not know what to do. But if Lennox thought any of the persons named "worthy to suffer a trial" he had but to advise her and she would set the law to work.

In truth the bills were becoming a nuisance. They multiplied on all hands. When the Tolbooth door became either too occupied or too closely watched, resort was had to church doors and the Tron in the High Street. It was to the Tron beam there was affixed a placard announcing that on sufficient security the smith who made false keys for Kirk o' Field would come forward and name his employers. Elsewhere was posted up another document affirming that the writer had sold sixty pounds' worth of gunpowder to James Balfour. A third placard was pictorial and monographic. There was an "M. R." and close by a hand grasping a sword, and lower down the letters "L. B." in proximity to a mallet.

News of the placards spread all over the country. It reached the ears of the brother of Ormeston. He had been severely wounded in an affray; but when he wrote about it to his brother in Edinburgh, he said that than his own injury he was far more hurt to learn that his brother was reported to have been

at the murder of Darnley. Let him purge himself of such a heinous charge. This letter Ormeston took to Bothwell, who in turn handed it to Mary. When she had read it, she turned her back on Ormeston, "gave a thring with her shoulder," and walked away.

Bothwell grew furious. Riding over from Seton one day with fifty of his followers he threatened in the public streets that if he knew the authors of the placards he would wash his hands in their blood. His soldiers kept him close company those days. They behaved like men fearful that their master's life would be attempted. And of Bothwell himself it was noted that when he spoke with anyone of whose friendship he was not assured his face bore a strange look and his hand played with his dagger.

Meanwhile Mary Stuart had received an outspoken letter from her cousin of England.

"My ears have been so astounded," Elizabeth wrote, "and my heart so frightened to hear of the horrible and abominable murder of your late husband, that I have scarcely spirit to write; yet I cannot conceal that I grieve more for you than him. I should not do the office of a faithful cousin and friend if I did not urge upon you to preserve your honour, rather than look through your fingers while those who have done you this pleasure, as most people say, escape. I counsel you so to take this matter to heart, that you may show the world what a noble Princess and loyal woman you are."

If Mary had been in perplexity as to what steps to take, the next letter from Lennox should have re-

solved her doubts. He repeated his advice for the immediate assembly of the nobility, otherwise than as a Parliament, that the writers of the bills might be called upon to come forward with their evidence, and then turned to the question of the names in those bills.

Lennox could not restrain a tone of irony.

“I marvel,” he wrote, “that the names have been kept from your Majesty’s ears, considering the effect of the said bills, and the names of the persons so openly talked of.”

But, that Mary might no longer plead ignorance, he repeated the list: Earl Bothwell, James Balfour, David Chambers, black John Spence, etc.

“And now your Majesty knowing the names,” Lennox concluded, “and being the party as well and more than I am, although I was the father, I doubt not but your Majesty will take order in the matter according to the weight of the cause.”

Several days before that letter reached Mary Stuart another placard had been displayed in the streets of Edinburgh. It was the most significant of all. In the upper portion the Queen was represented as a mermaid, with a whip in her hand; beneath, Bothwell was depicted as a hunted hare.

But now it had been discovered who was the principal author of those incriminating bills and placards—to wit, James Murray, son of the Laird of Tullibardine. And the discovery was followed by prompt action. For on the 14th of March Mary’s Privy Council charged Murray with “open and manifest treason” in setting up his “painted papers”

on the Tolbooth door, and gave orders for his arrest. Letters were directed to the provosts and baillies of the chief towns and ports charging them to make diligent search for the same James and threatening them with pain of death if they aided his escape.

Yet nine days later Mary expressed her willingness to act upon the information given in Murray's "painted papers."

Lennox's last letter had made it necessary to do something. And after six days' deliberation Darnley's widow replied that she had sent for her nobles to present themselves in Edinburgh during the coming week, and trusted that the "leisure and commodity" of Lennox would enable him to join them. This was his first invitation to the Court since his son was slain.

Between Lennox's letter with the list of names and Mary's reply of the 23rd of March the Queen had done something more than deliberate. She was more cognisant than Lennox of Bothwell's share in her husband's murder, and she now realized that she must do her utmost to safeguard her lover against the gathering storm. He already possessed great power as the Warden of the Borders, High-Admiral of Scotland, Keeper of Dunbar Castle, and Superior of Leith, but something was lacking. This was the command of Edinburgh Castle, the chief fortress of the kingdom, which was in the hands of the Earl of Mar, who also had the custody of Mary's infant son. Mar, perhaps conscious of impending trouble, agreed to surrender the castle and remove to Stirling with the young Prince, and no sooner

had he gone than Bothwell was given sole control of the vacated fortress. Surely he was safe now. In command of the castle which overawed the city, he could bid defiance to the worst ill-fortune.

Nor did Mary confine her love-tokens to such princely gifts as the Superiority of Leith and the Captainship of Edinburgh Castle. All Darnley's belongings, his horses and armour and clothes, passed into Bothwell's possession, and when the latter were taken to a tailor for the necessary alterations, that worthy grimly remarked that it was only right, and in accordance with the customs of the country, that the dead man's clothes should be given to the executioner. It is on record, too, that in this month of March the Queen made a special gift to Bothwell of three rich sacerdotal robes from the spoil she had taken several years earlier from Strathbogie Castle. Those robes had been made from cloth of gold taken at the Battle of Bannockburn, and had been consecrated by Bruce to the service of religion, but that fact did not deter Mary Stuart from handing them to Bothwell to enrich his wardrobe.

Sometime during these latter days of March there arrived for Mary another letter from the honest Archbishop of Glasgow. He wrote again from far-away Paris, and his letter gave a vivid picture, not only of his own stress of mind, but of the opinions of the French Court.

“Of this deed,” said Beaton, referring to Darnley’s murder, “if I were to write all that is spoken here, of the miserable state of your realm, of the dis-

honour of the nobility, mistrust and treason of your whole subjects, yea, that yourself is greatly and wrongously calumniated to be the motive principle of the whole, and all done by your command ; I can conclude nothing by what your Majesty writes to me yourself, that since it has pleased God to conserve you to take a rigorous vengeance thereof, that rather than that it be not actually taken, it appears to me better in this world that you had lost life and all."

Never was it so necessary for her, the faithful Beaton continued, to exert herself to the utmost to mete out such swift justice as should prove her innocence.

"Alas, madam ! over all Europe this day there is no purpose in head so frequent as of your Majesty, and of the present state of your realm, which is in the most part interpreted sinisterly."

If she acted promptly she would silence the tongue of slander, and re-establish her reputation in the eyes of the world.

"Otherwise," and this was Beaton's final warning, "I fear this to be the beginning of the first act of the tragedy."

Clearly, then, something had to be done. With the Queen of England calling her to action, and her Ambassador in Paris solemnly warning her against supineness, and the Queen Regent of France threatening her that if she did not keep her promise to revenge her husband's murder and clear herself she and her Court would count themselves her enemies, Mary Stuart at last realized the necessity for action.

Hence the Privy Council meeting which took place on the 28th of March. How far Mary had exerted herself to secure the presence of all her nobles there is no evidence to show; the result of her appeal was certainly meagre. For at the Council which at last arranged for Bothwell's trial only four peers were present. The others included two Bishops and three officials—nine in all.

And of the four nobles one was Bothwell himself! To such a pass had come all the appeals of Lennox. His pleas—the pleas of the man who was “father to him that is gone”—that those named in the bills should be “apprehended and put in sure keeping” had been scornfully unheeded. In none of her letters did Mary mention Bothwell's name, not even in the one which told how she had summoned her nobles. Where Lennox was specific she took refuge in generalities; it was farthest from her intention to arrest the chief culprit and clap him in “sure keeping.”

Thus Bothwell presided at his own preliminary trial, for such that Privy Council meeting really was. The other three peers were his accomplices; one of the Bishops was too deeply committed to the Queen to oppose any suggestion her lover might make; and of the officials one was Maitland himself. His, no doubt, was the pen which drafted the record of the meeting—a record which, despite its official verbiage, discloses the fact that the prosecution of Bothwell was shifted to the shoulders of the Earl of Lennox. He, and not the head of the State, was to be made responsible for producing the witnesses

who were to convict of Darnley's murder the most powerful noble at the Court.

For Mary had done with Lennox. After her letter of the 23rd of March she did not write him again. She took no notice of his absence from the Privy Council of the 28th, and did not offer him the slightest assistance in preparing his case. Not only did she laugh at his suggestion that she should imprison Bothwell, but his request that the others named in the bills should be put in "sure keeping" was wholly ignored. Nay, when the intrepid James Murray, the writer of the bills, offered to produce witnesses to make good his accusations, she made no sign.

And Mary, too, must have been a consenting party to that resolution of her Privy Council of the 28th of March which ordered the trial of Bothwell to take place on the following 12th of April. An interval of merely fifteen days was unprecedented. The established practice was for an accuser to be allowed forty days in which to prepare his case and summon his witnesses.

Three facts, then, are clear: The suspected persons were allowed full liberty instead of being arrested; Lennox was given but fifteen days to prepare his indictment single-handed; and the Crown, abrogating its usual office, assumed the attitude of an arbiter and not that of an accuser.

All this Lennox learnt from an official document and not from a personal letter from his daughter-in-law. Mary, as has been noted, held no further communication with Darnley's father. Instead, she

set her seal to a legal paper authorizing her sheriffs to summon the Earl of Lennox to appear before her justice at Edinburgh on the 12th of April, and warn him that that justice would on that day try the matter "without any longer delay or continuation."

When these things became known, when the hints of the placards were illuminated by the action of the Queen, when it was observed that Bothwell was most in favour at Court, it was not surprising that the gossip of the day at last formulated a theory which accounted for all. "The judgment of the people," so ran a letter of the day, "is that the Queen will marry Bothwell." That was written on the 29th of March, and on the next day the same correspondent added: "The Earl of Huntly has now consented to the divorce of his sister from Bothwell."

Those rumours were not confined to Scotland and England. They had reached Paris, for on the 30th of March the Venetian Ambassador at the French Court wrote:

"Immediately after the death of the King of Scotland the wife of one of the principal personages of the kingdom died by poison, and it is reported that a marriage between this personage and the Queen will follow; whence it is inferred that in order to obtain this end it had been settled between these two that the one should put her husband to death, and the other his wife."

Allowing for the distance of places, this was not a bad surmise of the course events were taking in Edinburgh. Bothwell, however, had devised an

easier plan than murder for the disposal of his wife. She, it will be remembered, was Huntly's sister, and Huntly was anxious to be restored to those estates which had been forfeited by his father's rebellion; hence the compact between the two earls. On the condition that Huntly persuaded his sister to agree to a divorce, Bothwell pledged himself to secure the return of Huntly's estates.

Early in April, then, and seven days before Bothwell's trial, the plot had so far ripened that Mary and Bothwell put their hands to a contract of marriage. The document, which was signed at Seton on the 5th of April, was written by Huntly, and set forth how the Queen promised to take her "noble and dear cousin" Earl Bothwell for her husband as soon as he had procured his divorce from his "pretended spouse," and Bothwell on his part pledged his "fidelity and honour" to prosecute the process of separation from that "pretended" wife.

Had Lennox known all this he would have realized how futile were his efforts to bring Bothwell to justice. As it was he was sufficiently perplexed. He had wit enough to discern that he was helpless as long as Bothwell was at liberty, and that without the aid of the Crown he could not hope to secure the presence of material witnesses. Besides, he had only fifteen, and not the usual forty, days, in which to prepare for the trial and gather his friends about him.

In this dilemma he hurried off a messenger to Queen Elizabeth beseeching her to write her sister of Scotland to postpone the trial. The date, he said,

was much sooner than he could bring together those who could testify as to Darnley's murder, nor could he so quickly gather "sufficient strength to defend such dangers as are intended." Lennox may have been slow-witted, but even less acuteness than he possessed could not fail to have discerned the peril involved in facing Bothwell while he remained master of the situation.

Nevertheless Lennox did what he could. As the 12th of April drew near he assembled such of his friends as were within call, and set out for Edinburgh. But he got no farther than Stirling. By that time his retinue had swollen to several hundreds, news whereof speedily reached Edinburgh. And then a messenger was dispatched from the Court ordering Lennox not to enter Edinburgh with more than six followers.

Checkmated at every turn, the father of the murdered Darnley made one last appeal for the assistance of the Queen. He pleaded with her once more, for justice and righteousness and honour, to apprehend and imprison the men whose names he had sent her; he reminded her that suspected persons were always so handled; he warned her that if she did not do so there would be no just trial; he told her plainly that those who sought justice were discouraged by the fact that the men most suspected were "great at Court" and "about your Majesty's person"; and finally he implored Mary, if she would not move in the matter, to grant him her warrant for the apprehension of Bothwell and the rest.

But Mary made no sign.

And in those days there was a man who wandered through the streets of Edinburgh in the night-time, crying :

“Vengeance on those who caused me to shed innocent blood! O Lord, open the heavens and pour down vengeance on me and those that have destroyed the innocent!”

That troubled mortal, however, was speedily apprehended and thrown into a noisome dungeon called “The Foul Thieves’ Pit.”

Meanwhile Bothwell had completed his arrangements for the trial. Mary Stuart was fast in his toils ; he was assured of the judge who was to preside at the assize ; the jury would have a preponderance of his friends ; the city was filled with his armed followers.

But through the dark of the night of the 11th of April a messenger was spurring his way in hot haste to Holyrood Palace. Elizabeth of England had granted Lennox his request. She had written to Mary. She told her that an honourable burial was better than a maculated life. She supported the plea of Lennox. She begged her, for God’s sake, to behave as one innocent of Darnley’s murder. She implored her to delay the trial.

Day had dawned ere the bearer of that letter reached Holyrood. He was the Provost-Marshall of Berwick, and had been commanded to deliver the missive with all speed. But he might have spared himself his midnight haste. His arrival and the cause of his errand seem to have been anticipated.

Though it was now six o'clock no one about the palace would undertake to deliver the letter; the Queen was sleeping, he had better tarry till she rose.

Three hours later he tried again. The courtyard of Holyrood was alive with servants and horses and armed men, and when he sought to enter he was violently thrust back. At last he pleaded that some gentleman of credit would undertake faithfully to deliver to the Queen of Scotland the message he bore from the Queen of England. Upon this one stepped forward who claimed to speak with the authority of the Earl Bothwell. That noble, he said, understanding that the messenger had a letter for the Queen, commanded him to advise the bearer to go about some other matter, for the Queen was so disquieted with the business of that day that there was no likelihood of her being accessible until after the trial.

Still detained at the gateway, and jeered at as an "English villain" who had come to stay the assize, the Provost-Marshal was beginning to despair of his errand when Maitland and Bothwell came out. Immediately all the lords and gentlemen vaulted on to their horses, but Maitland came forward to the English messenger and demanded his letter. And then he and Bothwell went back into the palace. They were gone some half-hour, and on their emerging once more mounted their horses and made as though they would pass by without taking notice of the English Queen's messenger. He, however, pressed through the crowd to Maitland and asked

what reply the Scottish Queen had been pleased to give.

“As Her Majesty is still sleeping,” Maitland answered, “we have not delivered the letter. Besides,” he added, “there will be no meet time for that until after the assize.”

With that Elizabeth’s messenger had to be content.

And now the cavalcade prepared to start. Lords and gentlemen and soldiers numbered some four thousand, and they made an imposing show as they prepared to leave the courtyard of Holyrood. For his own bodyguard Bothwell, mounted on Darnley’s favourite horse, had a band of two hundred arquebusiers, and as he took his place in their midst he was greeted with a “merry and lusty cheer.” But ere he rode out of the courtyard he turned to look back toward the palace. And at that moment a Frenchman pulled the sleeve of the English messenger and bade him look up. He did so; at one of the windows stood the “sleeping” Queen, waving a friendly farewell to Darnley’s murderer.

So heartened, Bothwell rode away to the Tolbooth.

Now the doors of the Tolbooth were straightly kept. Bothwell’s arquebusiers stationed themselves at all the entrances and permitted none to enter save unsuspected persons.

And in the composition of the court good care had been taken that the “friends of my Lord Bothwell” should hold the upper hand. The judge was none other than the Earl of Argyle, whose name was on the bond for Darnley’s murder; the jury

had been chosen from those who were already indebted to Bothwell, or were anxious to win his favour; and the indictment had been framed with a manifest flaw, for it affirmed that Darnley had been murdered on the 9th instead of the 10th of February.

Yet Bothwell was ill at ease. His looks betrayed his anxiety. Ormeston plucked him by the sleeve, and whispered :

“ Fie, my lord, what devil is this you are doing ? Your face shows what you are. Hold up your head for God’s sake, and look blithe ; you look as though you were going to execution.”

“ Hold your tongue,” Bothwell answered ; “ I would not it were yet to do. But I have an escape from it, as you will know by-and-by.”

Formal preliminaries occupied a considerable time. There was the Queen’s commission to be read, and the three endorsements of the messengers who had proclaimed the commission at the market-crosses of Edinburgh and other towns. Everything was conducted with the gravity and precision of a genuine trial.

Then followed the indictment, read aloud by the clerk :

“ You, James, Earl Bothwell, are indicted on account of the cruel and horrid murder of the most excellent, most high, and most mighty Prince the King, the late most dear spouse of the Queen’s Majesty, our Sovereign Lady, committed in the dead of the night, at his house near the Church of the Fields in this city, as he was taking his rest, by treasonably setting fire to a great quantity of gun-

powder in the said house, by the violence whereof the whole house was blown up into the air, and the King himself by you killed traitorously and cruelly, wilfully, and by premeditated felony. And this you did the 9th day of February last past, in the dead of the night as aforesaid, as is notorious, and you cannot deny."

And now all was in order for the trial. At the bidding of the judge the defendant and plaintiff were called to appear, and Bothwell at once stepped to the bar with his two advocates.

But ere the clerk could once more summon "Matthew, Earl of Lennox," a man rose in the body of the court. He appeared, he said, for the Earl of Errol, Constable of Scotland, to whose office pertained the trial of all peers charged with committing murder within four miles of the royal palace. The Earl of Errol, then, and not the Earl of Argyle, ought of right to preside at that trial.

Silence fell upon the court, and Argyle turned to his legal advisers for their opinion. They, however, made light of the claim, and Argyle announced that the trial would proceed.

"Matthew, Earl of Lennox!" called the clerk; "Matthew, Earl of Lennox!"

For a second there was no response. And then there arose one who announced himself as Robert Cunningham, servant to Matthew, Earl of Lennox.

"My Lords, I am come hither, being sent by my master, my Lord of Lennox, to declare the cause why he is this day absent, having full power from him for that effect. The cause then of his absence is

the shortness of the time allowed him, and that he is hindered to have his friends and servants, who ought to accompany him for his honour, and the safety of his person, considering the strength of the opposite party, and that he has no assistance from any of his friends, but must stand by himself ; therefore his lordship has commanded me to require another competent day, according to the importance of this cause, that he may be here present. I protest that if those who assist in this judgment and inquest upon the persons accused, do undertake to acquit them of the King's murder that it shall be held as a voluntary error, and not of ignorance, since it is notoriously known who they are that have murdered the King, as my said lord and master affirms."

What was to be done ? Cunningham's daring interposition had not been foreseen. It complicated a task already disagreeable enough. But at this juncture Mary's own advocates came to the assistance of the presiding judge, arguing for a variety of reasons that there could be no delay of the trial.

So the matter was committed to the decision of the jury—fifteen peers and others, with the Earl of Caithness as foreman—who at once left the Tolbooth to discuss their verdict.

Nor did they return for several hours. Theirs was an unenviable task. But at length they divined a way out of the difficulty. Returning to the court, then, the Earl of Caithness announced that the jury absolved Earl Bothwell of the murder of the King on these grounds : Nobody had proved the truth of the accusation, no accuser had appeared, and there-

fore they declared him free “as far as they could have any knowledge of the fact.” Nor was that all. The indictment itself was not true in point of fact, for the murder was not committed on the 9th, but on the 10th day of February.

And so the farce was played out. It had been long a-playing—some seven hours by the clock—and dusk had fallen when Bothwell and his followers rode back to Holyrood.

But ere the day ended he sent a servant to affix this placard to the Tolbooth door :

“ For the defence of my honour and reputation, if there be any one, whether noble or commoner, rich or poor, disposed to accuse me of treason, secret or overt, let him present himself that I may give him combat in this just cause.”

Swiftly was that bravado answered. Indeed it rained answers. One gave Bothwell the lie in his throat, and offered to prove him the murderer by law of arms if the King of France and the Queen of England would appoint a day in their dominions.

And then, on the market-cross, there was posted a placard which went to the root of the matter. There were none, it said, who could divorce Bothwell and his wife, even though he were proved to be an abominable adulterer.

“ For,” so the impeachment ended, “ he has murdered the husband of her he intends to marry, whose promise he had long before the murder.”

CHAPTER III

THE MARRIAGE

“HER he intends to marry.”

There stood the words on the market-cross, where all might read them. Once more the furtive whisperings of bated conversations, and the darkly veiled hints of private letters had given place to a definite public record in black and white. The mock trial of Bothwell and its collusive verdict had acted like a chemical solvent on a document written in invisible ink.

Bothwell’s matrimonial ambition was hereditary. His great-great-grandfather was credited by legend with holding the widow of James I. captive in Dunbar Castle; his great-grandfather with being a lover of the widow of James II. But there was nothing legendary about the regal aspirations of his father. When that noble, Patrick Hepburn, third Earl Bothwell, divorced his wife in 1543, it was with the desire of replacing her by Mary of Guise, the widow of James V. He haunted the Court for months at a stretch, lavished his wealth in personal adornment and presents and entertainments, only to learn in the end that the Queen-Dowager, having once been a King’s wife, had a heart “too high to look any lower.”

But he did not despair. And, pending a new campaign, he proffered the favour of his love to the fair Lady Borthwick. As that lady was, for the time being, a compulsory grass-widow, her lord being in captivity, he may have imagined that she would be grateful for his attentions. And the Lady Borthwick led him to understand that such was the case. At any rate she received his messenger graciously, and bade him tell his master that she would meet him privily that night in one of the outbuildings of Borthwick Castle. Earl Bothwell was punctual to the appointment, but instead of finding himself in the arms of his ladylove, he was firmly grasped by masculine hands, and promptly consigned to a dungeon of the castle. His imprisonment, however, was not of long duration, for the Lady Borthwick soon offered him in exchange for her own liege lord.

Two or three years later, his amorous passions still uncooled, the Earl Bothwell cast around for a new matrimonial adventure. Weary of the coyness of the Scottish Queen-Dowager, and the practical joking of the unappreciative Lady Borthwick, he bethought him of the marriage-market across the Border. And he was willing, if need were, to change his allegiance at the same time. Hence his appeal to the Protector Somerset to the effect that if he would find him a wife in England he would surrender his strong fortress, Hermitage Castle, to English soldiers. He had three ladies on his list—the widow of the Duke of Suffolk, or my Lady Mary, or my Lady Elizabeth, the latter, of course, being the

daughters of Henry VIII., and heirs-apparent to the English throne. Patrick, Earl Bothwell, however, was not destined to anticipate the success of his son James.

After posting his challenge on the Tolbooth door on the night of April 12th, that noble disappears from view for a day. Doubtless there was a sumptuous banquet in Holyrood Palace that night to celebrate his triumphant acquittal, whereat he probably received many congratulations from the Queen and her Court on the vindication of his "honour and reputation." And for the following day he would have occupation enough in preparing for the opening of Parliament.

Now, the Parliament of Scotland of that April month in 1567 was not a protracted affair. Ostensibly it lasted from Monday, the 14th, to Saturday, the 19th, but it met only on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday, and of these three days two were given up to routine matters. That is to say, on Monday the proceedings were restricted to the calling of the roll, and on Wednesday to the election of the Lords of the Articles. The latter were the committee to which was consigned the task of drafting the Acts which were to be adopted on the last and only really legislative day of the Parliament.

Even on Monday, however, Bothwell was present as one of the commissioners representing the crown, and he was equally punctual in attendance on Wednesday and Saturday. On Wednesday, indeed, he was a conspicuous member in Mary's state procession as she proceeded to the Tolbooth, for he, not-

withstanding all that had happened, was chosen to bear the sceptre in that pageant. The spectacle was little to the liking of the Edinburgh citizens. Even the market-women, as the procession moved through the streets, greeted the Queen with the cry :

“God preserve your Grace if ye be innocent of the King’s death !”

Perhaps Her Grace anticipated trouble. Otherwise, why had she declined the offer of the magistrates and the trained band to provide her, in accordance with ancient custom, with a bodyguard, and expressed her preference for the more warlike arquebusiers ? Those soldiers had proved their efficiency by the rigour with which they had guarded the Tolbooth on the day of Bothwell’s trial, and their presence in the Queen’s procession effectually kept the peace save for those sinister shouts of—

“God preserve your Grace if ye be innocent of the King’s death !”

That day’s business in the Tolbooth, a building of grim reminiscence to Bothwell, consisted, as has been noted, of little more than the election of the Lords of the Articles, on which committee a place was, of course, found for the Queen’s favourite.

It behoved him, indeed, to secure a place among those lords, for he had many debts to pay. In the business, then, which was prepared for the final and important day of the Parliament there appeared such matters as the rescinding of the forfeiture against the Earl of Huntly, the cancelling of other forfeitures which had been imposed on other participants of the Huntly rebellion, and ratifications

of estates or offices to the Earl of Morton, the Earl of Caithness, Lord Herries, and David Chambers.

Nor was Bothwell too modest to share in the spoil. He was duly confirmed in the possession of the estates he already enjoyed, but in addition, to recompense him for the lavish manner in which he had "superexpended himself" in the service of the state, he was granted a gift of considerable tracts of valuable land lying adjacent to the castle of Dunbar.

Yet these were not the most significant of the Acts of Parliament passed on the 19th of April. The first place on the agenda of the business day was yielded to an "Act concerning the Religion," which gave to the Protestants such absolute freedom of worship and immunity from pains and penalties that when, eight months later, the reformed party had the supreme power in their hands, they were so unable to devise a more explicit law that they contented themselves with repeating it. Now it should be remembered that Bothwell, so far as he had any religion, was counted a Protestant, and it was no doubt at his desire that this Act was framed and adopted. The Queen's influence was sufficient to secure the support of the Catholics; it might be that such a concession to the reformed faith would make the Protestants his friends.

Bothwell's influence, too, and Mary's also, can be traced in the "Act anent the Makaris and Upsettaris of Placardis and Billis." All efforts to capture and punish James Murray had failed; and his example in affixing "painted papers" in public places had

been so largely followed that the practice had become an intolerable nuisance. It was especially galling to Bothwell that the valiant challenge he emitted the night of his trial had resulted in a new crop of defamatory placards. His threat to wash his hands in the blood of the authors of those bills having failed, Parliament's power was invoked to make such placarding a death offence.

“Forasmuch”—so the Act ran—“as by a licentious abuse lately come into practice in this realm, there have been placards and bills and tickets of defamation, set up under silence of night in divers public places, to the slander, reproach, and infamy of the Queen's Majesty, and divers of her nobles; which disorder, if it be suffered longer to remain unpunished, may redound not only to the great hurt and detriment of all noblemen in their good fame, private calumniators having by this means liberty to backbite them, but also the commonwealth may be disquieted and occasion of quarrel taken upon false and untrue slander; for remedy therefore the Queen's Majesty and three estates of Parliament statute and ordain that in time coming, where any such bill or placard of defamation be found fixed or lose, the person first seeing or finding the same shall take it and incontinent destroy it, so that no further knowledge or copy pass of the same; and if he fails therein, and thereby the writing is copied and distributed among the people, the first seer and finder thereof shall be punished in the same manner as the first inventer and upsetter of the same.”

And the punishment? A defamer of the Queen was liable to the "pain of death"; calumniators of nobles and others were to be imprisoned and dealt with according to Her Majesty's pleasure and the "quality of the person" libelled.

That either of these Acts, or any of the other twenty-eight Edicts registered on the 19th of April, was discussed at any length is improbable, for the sitting had concluded before four o'clock in the afternoon. Bothwell doubtless did his best to expedite the proceedings, he having arranged to entertain the chief nobles at supper as soon as the Parliament rose.

By four o'clock in the afternoon, then, the principal lords had found their way from the Tolbooth to the tavern of a man named Ainslie, where, at Bothwell's expense, they sat down to a supper of sumptuous viands and wines. And to give greater distinction to the entertainment, the tavern was guarded on all sides by the host's two hundred arquebusiers.

Having completed their Parliamentary duties, Bothwell and his guests were in a merry mood. Besides, not a few of them had had their estates materially increased by the Acts passed that day, and hence were in the first flush of the happiness engendered by an accession of fortune. So they ate heartily and drank deeply. And at a late hour, when the wine-cup had done its work, Bothwell rose and addressed his guests.

He held in his hand, he said, a document which he desired their permission to read, in the hope that they would agree to sign it.

It was in two parts. The first set forth that the "noble and mighty" Earl Bothwell had been charged in private placards with the murder of the King, had been accused of that crime by the Earl of Lennox, had been tried by his peers and found guiltless, and had made offer to defend his innocence by the law of arms. In view of these facts, so the document went on, and in consideration of the ancient and noble traditions of his house and the friendship which existed between him and his fellow peers, the undersubscribed agreed that if in future any persons charged him with the King's murder they would make his quarrel their own and support him to the full extent of their power.

Nor was that all. There was a second matter in which Bothwell would be glad to receive the support of his guests. He read on :

"Moreover, weighing and considering the time present, and how our Sovereign the Queen's Majesty is now destitute of a husband, in which solitary state the commonwealth of this realm may not permit Her Highness to continue and endure, but at some time Her Highness in appearance may be inclined to yield unto a marriage; and therefore, in case the former affectionate and hearty service of the said earl rendered to Her Majesty from time to time, and his other good qualities and behaviour, may move Her Majesty so far to humble herself, as preferring one of her native-born subjects to all foreign Princes, to take to husband the said earl—we, and every one of us undersubscribed, upon our honour and fidelity, obliges us, and promises, not

only to further, advance, and set forward the marriage to be solemnized and completed between Her Highness and the said noble lord, with our votes, counsel, fortification, and assistance in word and deed, at such time as it shall please Her Majesty to think it convenient, and how soon the law shall allow it to be done; but in case any would presume directly or indirectly, openly, or under whatsoever colour or pretence, to hinder, hold back, or disturb the same marriage, we shall in that behalf esteem, hold, and repute the hinderers, adversaries, or disturbers thereof, as our common enemies, and evil willers, and notwithstanding the same, take part and fortify the said earl to the said marriage, so far as it may please our said Sovereign Lady to allow; and therein shall spend and bestow our lives and goods against all that leive or die may, as we shall answer to God, and upon our own fidelity and conscience; and in case we do on the contrary, never to have reputation or credit at any time hereafter, but to be accounted unworthy and faithless traitors."

One of the peers at Ainslie's supper-table was sufficiently sobered by the reading of this document to realize the peril of signing it. This was the Earl of Eglington, who, as the record states, managed to elude Bothwell's arquebusiers and "slipped away." But the others, whether muddled with drink or influenced by Bothwell's assertion that he could show the Queen's warrant for what he was doing, put their hands to the bond without protest. There were some twenty of them, including Argyle,

Hunty, and Caithness, and the Lords Seton, Boyd, and Herries.

Had Mary Stuart no friends to warn her of the perilous path she was treading? Yes, there were at least two who tried to save her from herself, and one of these, if Sir James Melville reported truly, was none other than that Lord Herries who signed the bond at Ainslie's supper.

Such seeming inconsistency will surprise no one familiar with the history of the times. The Scottish lords had a peculiar penchant for bonds; they seem to have been always busy signing them; and the alacrity with which they pledged themselves body and soul to one party to-day was not the more remarkable than the eagerness with which they transferred their allegiance to another party on the morrow.

Herries, then, may quite probably have warned Mary as Melville says he did. He fell on his knees, so Melville affirmed, and humbly besought the Queen to remember her honour and dignity and the safety of her son, all of which would be endangered if she married Bothwell. Her reply was disconcerting:

“I marvel,” Mary said, “how these reports can go abroad, for there is no such thing in my mind.”

Melville’s own experience was somewhat different. Just as he was meditating how best to broach the subject, he received a letter from Thomas Bishop, a Scotsman living in England. The rumour that Mary contemplated marrying Bothwell had reached his ears, and Bishop wrote strongly on the subject:

“It is bruited in England,” he said, “that Her

Majesty is to marry the Earl Bothwell, who was the murderer of her husband, who at present has a wife of his own, a man full of all vice. I cannot believe those reports, for I judge Her Majesty to be of far greater knowledge than to commit such a gross oversight, so prejudicial every way to her interest. If she marry him, she will lose the favour of God, her own reputation, and the hearts of all England, Ireland, and Scotland."

Hurrying to Holyrood, Melville sought an interview with Mary, and handed her the letter to read. When she had finished, she handed it back without a word, but immediately called Maitland to her side, telling him that Melville had shown her a strange letter, and requesting him to peruse it.

"What can it be?" he asked.

"A device of his own," Mary answered, "tending to the wreck of the Earl Bothwell."

Drawing Melville aside, Maitland took the letter and read it.

"What has been in your mind?" he asked. "As soon as Earl Bothwell learns of this, as I fear he will very shortly, he will have you slain."

"But it is a sore matter," Melville rejoined, "to see the Queen run to utter wreck, and nobody to be so far concerned in her as to forewarn her of her danger."

Maitland shook his head.

"You have done more honestly than wisely," he returned, "and therefore I pray you to retire diligently before the Earl Bothwell comes up from his dinner."

Melville took the hint, and left the palace immedi-

ately. And none too quickly, for, as Maitland had foreseen, Mary at once told Bothwell what had happened, premising, however, that he was not to harm her old friend. And a day or two later, when Bothwell's rage had cooled, and he had repeated his promise not to injure the offender, Melville returned to the Court to assure the Queen that the letter had really come from Bishop, and that its contents harmonized with the warning he had intended giving Her Majesty. "But," he wrote in recording the incident, "I found she had no mind to enter upon this subject."

Indeed, it was too late. Mary could not draw back. Whatever the outcome, she must go forward lest she be overwhelmed in a far greater shame. None knew, save she and Bothwell, that there was an imperative reason for closing her ears, and steeling her heart to the warnings of her friends.

During the day following Ainslie's supper, Kirkcaldy of Grange penned a letter which summed up the situation. "The Queen," he wrote, "has said that she cares not to lose France, England, and her own country for Bothwell, and will go with him to the world's end in a white petticoat ere she leave him."

Early on Monday, then, the 21st of April, she left Edinburgh for Stirling, to pay a visit to her infant son. His guardian, the Earl of Mar, was so suspicious that when the Queen wished to go to the royal apartments he stipulated that she should be accompanied by two of her gentlewomen only. That precautionary measure was doubtless respon-

sible for the dark stories which were told shortly after, as that the infant Prince declined his mother's embraces, answered her proffered kiss with a scratch, and dashed from her hand an apple which, on being eaten by a greyhound, was found to be poisoned. "A sugar-loaf, also for the Prince"—so ran another legend—"was brought at the same time—it is judged to be very ill compounded."

But however much or little Mary may have been wounded in her maternal pride, she had ample cause for perturbation during her absence from Edinburgh. It was the first time she and Bothwell had been parted since Darnley's murder, and the real cause of the separation consisted in the fact that it was to be a means to an end. They both realized that it was absolutely necessary to offer the world an excuse for a hasty marriage. To provide that excuse an ingenious plan had been devised, which was that on her return from Stirling she should be waylaid and seized by Bothwell, who was to carry her prisoner to Dunbar Castle.

Such was the plot in its main features—the details were to be elaborated by Bothwell, and communicated to Mary. Late in the day, then, when she reached Stirling, a messenger came in the person of Bothwell's brother-in-law, Huntly. He was in the secret, but had grown timid. And he tried to persuade the Queen to abandon her purpose.

Mary was alarmed. She wrote at once to Bothwell.

"I am frantic," she wrote. "You had promised that you would plan everything, and send me word

what I should do, and you have done nothing. I advised you to take heed of your false brother-in-law: he came to me, and told me that you had willed him to write to you where and when you should come to me, and thereupon hath preached to me that it was a foolish enterprise, and that with mine honour I could never marry you, and that his folks would not suffer it, and the lords would unsay themselves. To be short, he is all contrary."

Mary's pen hurried on :

"Seeing that I am come so far, if you do not withdraw yourself of your own self, no persuasion, nor death itself, shall make me fail of my promise. As touching the place, you are too negligent. Choose it yourself, and send me word of it."

Nor could she lay the ghost of jealousy. Perhaps he had changed his mind; "absence hath power over you, who hath two strings to your bow."

"I would I were dead," she cried, "for I see all goeth ill."

With the new day came calmer thoughts. And whereas the letter of the previous night had been sent off by a secret messenger unknown to Huntly, Mary now penned a hasty epistle such as she did not mind Huntly seeing. It was brief, and, after an expression of willingness to fall in with any suggestion as to time and place, reminded Bothwell that she would ground her pardon of the seizure on his good services and the friendliness of the lords.

Hardly had that letter been dispatched, however, than Huntly came to Mary with a new fear. There were several lords in her train, he said, who would

rather die than see her carried away. The Queen advised him to have as little as possible to do with those he mistrusted. And then she wrote again to Bothwell. She told him Huntly's fear ; gave him an idea of the number of men who would attend her on her return, and concluded : " For the honour of God be accompanied rather with more than less, for that is the principal of my care."

On Wednesday was begun the return journey to Edinburgh, but a halt was made for the night at Linlithgow. And it was there, late in the day, that Mary received a message from Bothwell, borne by Ormeston. She at once wrote an answer.

All her fears were at rest. She had received his final instructions, and as a token that she would obey them sent him a ring, enclosing a lock of her hair. Implying thereby, as she said, that by putting him in possession of the spoil of that member which is the chief of the other members of the body, she granted him dominion over all the rest with the consent of her heart. She had received, too, his contract of marriage with extreme joy.

" The which," she added, " shall not part forth out of my bosom until that marriage of our bodies be made in public, as sign of all that I either hope or desire of bliss in this world."

French Paris bore the letter to Bothwell, whom he found encamped with a great company of soldiers. When he had read it and written his answer, the earl dispatched Paris back to the Queen with the reply and this verbal message :

"Recommend me humbly to Her Majesty, and tell her that I shall go to seek her on the road to the bridge."

So highly-strung was Mary Stuart during those three anxious days that she sought relief for her feelings in writing a series of sonnets. Eleven in all were composed, and they give a vivid picture of her mental conflicts and jealous doubts.

In the first, after an appeal to the Divine compassion that she might learn how to give Bothwell a convincing proof of her love, she cites the many pledges she had already made of the sincerity of her passion.

"I have put in hazard for him both fame and conscience,
I will for his sake renounce the world,
I will die to set him forward.
What remaineth to give proof of my constancy?"

And the second sonnet dwells on the same note, and sets forth how she had hazarded all for her lover's sake—her country, her subjects, her honour, her life. Then the strain changes to jealousy. Mary could not forget that meanwhile Bothwell was the husband of another.

"She for her honour oweth you obedience ;
I in obeying you may receive dishonour,
Not being (to my displeasure) your wife as she.'

On that theme Mary dwells through several sonnets, which plead the merits and strength of her own disinterested love as compared with the interested affection of the Lady Bothwell, and finally

returns to the keynote of her opening lines. She had despised honour for Bothwell's sake.

“ For him I have hazarded greatness and conscience,
For him I have forsaken all kin and friends.”

If Mary Stuart and Bothwell imagined their plot was known only to themselves and Huntly they were woefully mistaken. On the very day, April 24th, on which it was to be put into execution, Sir William Kirkcaldy was writing another of his terse letters to a friend in England. And this was what he said :

“ This is to advertise you that Bothwell's wife is going to part with her husband, and great part of our lords have subscribed the marriage betwixt the Queen and him. The Queen rode to Stirling this last Monday and returns this Thursday. I doubt not but ye have heard Bothwell has gathered many of his friends, some say to ride in Liddesdale, but I believe it not, for he is minded to meet the Queen this day, called Thursday, and to take her by the way, and bring her to the Dunbar. Judge ye if it be with her will or not !”

Nay, away on the English border at Berwick, another letter-writer was the same day penning this information for the English Court :

“ The Earl Bothwell has gathered many of his friends, well appointed, some say to ride in Liddesdale, but there is feared some other purpose much different.”

How much different the events of that Thursday proved. Bothwell had, indeed, assembled his friends ; they were well appointed ; and, heedful of

Mary's warning, "be accompanied rather with more than less," they numbered some eight hundred, but instead of riding off to Liddesdale they took the Linlithgow road from Edinburgh and halted at the appointed spot.

In due course the Queen and her retinue appeared, Huntly and Maitland and Sir James Melville riding nearest her person. So few were in the secret, and so warlike was the aspect of Bothwell's followers, that when that earl rode forward and seized Mary's bridle not a few of the Queen's attendants made as though they would defend her. But she quickly intervened.

"I am ready," she said, "to go with the Earl Bothwell wherever he wishes rather than bloodshed and death should result."

So the seizure of the Queen was effected peaceably, and her chief followers—Huntly, Maitland, and Melville—were with her led captive to Dunbar Castle. As they rode along the captain who had charge of Melville assured him that everything was done with the Queen's consent.

News of the capture was soon on its way to the English Court, with an explanation of its inner purpose. "This Queen," wrote Kirkcaldy, "will never cease till she has wrecked all the honest men of this realm. She was minded to cause Bothwell ravish her, to the end that she may the sooner end the marriage, which she promised before she caused the murder of her husband." Many would revenge it, Kirkcaldy added, were it not that they feared Elizabeth would resent their action.

That Mary Stuart was determined to marry the man whom everyone held guilty of her husband's murder had been common talk at the English Court for several weeks. As early as the 14th of April de Silva wrote from London to the King of Spain that a divorce was being effected between Bothwell and his wife, and that the end in view was that he might be free to marry the Queen. And exactly a week later the Spanish Ambassador sent his master a long account of an interview he had had with the Earl of Moray, who had arrived in London five days earlier.

"I asked him," de Silva wrote, "if the statement about the divorce between Bothwell and his wife was true, and he said it was. As he tells the story it appears to be a somewhat novel sort of divorce, as it is on the petition of the wife. They had been married hardly a year and a half, and she alleges in her petition that her husband has committed adultery. I asked him whether there had been any ill-treatment or quarrels to account for the divorce, to which he replied that there had been none, but that the wife had taken proceedings at the instance of her brother, the Earl of Huntly, who, to curry favour with Bothwell, had persuaded her to do so, and at Bothwell's request the earl was to be restored to his position. . . . Moray told me he had heard here that the divorce would be effected in order that the Queen might marry Bothwell, but he did not believe it considering the Queen's position and her great virtue, as well as the events which have taken place." But Moray had to admit that the French Ambas-

sador, du Croq, was convinced that if the divorce were effected the Queen would certainly marry Bothwell.

Some two weeks later, on the 3rd of May to be precise, de Silva, in writing to inform the King of Spain of Mary's seizure, added, on the authority of a Catholic correspondent, this significant comment :

"Although the Queen sent secretly to the Governor of the town of Dunbar to sally out with his troops and release her, it is believed that the whole thing has been arranged so that if anything comes of the marriage the Queen may make out that she was forced into it."

And in Paris, too, the same interpretation was soon current. Many believed, wrote the Venetian Ambassador in that city, that the "force was voluntary, concerted by her to escape in some part the blame which must ensue from this marriage."

Perhaps the only persons who regarded the seizure of the Queen as an act of treason on the part of Bothwell were those worthy nobles and citizens of Aberdeen who sent their Sovereign an urgent message on the 27th of April. They had heard, they said, that Her Majesty had been ravished by the Earl Bothwell against her will. If that were so they desired to know the Queen's pleasure and what they should do towards "the reparation of that matter," promising that "there shall be nothing left undone" to effect her rescue. Whether that loyal message ever reached Mary's hands does not appear ; if it did she probably handed it to Bothwell with a smile.

For now, more than ever, it was too late to look back. It will be remembered that so far back as the 29th of March a correspondent of the English Court had written : "The judgment of the people is that the Queen will marry Bothwell," and that the same writer on the following day reported that the Earl of Huntly had consented to the divorce of his sister. There were excellent grounds for both statements. Nine days earlier, indeed,—that is, on the 20th of March—the legal representatives of the Lady Bothwell had secured procuratory to act on her behalf. Hence more than a month before Bothwell led Mary Stuart a seeming captive to Dunbar Castle his lawful wife had commenced proceedings for her divorce.

And now it was necessary for both parties to expedite those proceedings as much as possible. At Dunbar, then, on the 28th of April, Bothwell's legal representative was armed with procuratory to act in the earl's interest so far as Lady Bothwell's action was concerned. Thus everything was in order for the speedy hearing of Lady Bothwell's process against her husband.

Certainly no time was lost. Lady Bothwell made her formal claim for divorce on the 26th of April, supporting her plea with the assertion that her husband had committed adultery with one named Bessie Crawford in the months of May and June of the previous year; therefore she "requires to be no longer repute bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, but that she be discerned to be free to marry in the Lord where she pleases"

Three days later the civil court met for the trial of the case. Bothwell's advocate was present, but neither offered opposition nor cross-examined the witnesses. His instructions were obviously restricted to a watching brief. And so the witnesses told their stories without interruption.

One of them was none other than that Pat Wilson who had helped to carry the gunpowder to Kirk o' Field, evidently a most accommodating servant. Wilson was loquacious. He gave a sketch of his own history; described the marriage of Bothwell in Holyrood Palace; and then got to business. Bessie Crawford was a bonny little woman, black-haired, pale of face, twenty years old, and the daughter of a smith. Yes, he had seen my Lord Bothwell have carnal company with the same Bessie; it was in the month of May, and the place was a close outside the cloister of Haddington Abbey. That was after Bessie had been dismissed his lady's service "by reason of suspicion with my lord."

Pat's evidence was duly corroborated by other witnesses, notably his fellow-servant Thomas, who had also been a spectator of my Lord Bothwell's lapses from virtue. And George Dalgleish confirmed the story of Bessie's dismissal.

All of which was "taken to avizandum," as the Scots lawyers phrase it. But that private deliberation did not occupy the court long. On the 3rd of May there was another sitting at which sentence was pronounced. It set forth that, in view of the depositions of "divers famous witnesses," the commissioners had no option save to declare the Earl

Bothwell "to be separate, cut off and divorced *simpliciter* from the same noble lady, and she to be free to marry in the Lord where she pleases, as freely as she might have done before the contract and solemnization of marriage with the said noble lord."

But what of Bothwell himself? Was he, too, free to "marry in the Lord" where he pleased?

By no means. That is, not according to the Roman Catholic view. By the law of the Church to which Mary Stuart belonged, a divorce for adultery did not leave Bothwell free to marry again. The decree was one of separation and nothing more. He was no longer his wife's husband, but he could not become the husband of any other woman.

Such an *impasse*, however, had been anticipated. Mary and Bothwell had not hazarded so much to be defeated just as they had nearly attained their end. All that was necessary was for Bothwell to secure a divorce from his wife on grounds recognized by the Catholic Church.

Hence the second process of divorce instituted by Bothwell himself. On the 27th of April, then, a commission was given authorizing the Archbishop of St. Andrews and other clergy of the Catholic faith to consider the earl's application for a divorce on the plea that he and his wife were related within the forbidden degrees and had been married without the necessary dispensation. This cousinly relationship was established in a subtle manner. As thus: Bothwell frankly admitted that before his marriage to Lady Jean Gordon he had committed fornication

with one of her near kinswomen, and was consequently by that very act made a kinsman of Lady Jean Gordon within the prohibited degree.

Now, nothing less than a Papal dispensation, a formidable document difficult to obtain and provocative of delay, could remove such a serious obstacle. And such a dispensation had not been obtained. Therefore his marriage to Lady Jean Gordon had been null and void all through.

Such was Bothwell's case, duly submitted to the Right Reverend Archbishop and his clerical colleagues. They made short work of their task. All was over, indeed, in a couple of days, and on the 7th of May sentence was duly pronounced. It was a clear case of unlawful marriage. So the reverend judges declared the union dissolved, adding that the marriage was and had been null from the beginning in respect of that relationship in blood "which hindered their lawful marriage without a dispensation obtained of before."

But surely John Hamilton, the Right Reverend Archbishop of St. Andrews, found it difficult to preserve his gravity as he pronounced that decree. For Bothwell *had* procured a dispensation for his marriage with Lady Jean Gordon. And that dispensation had been granted by the same right reverend prelate who pronounced the marriage null on the ground that no such document existed!

Nay, more; just as surely as Lady Jean Gordon and Bothwell and the Archbishop of St. Andrews knew that the dispensation had been granted and was still in existence, so is it beyond doubt that the

procuring of that document was equally within the knowledge of Mary Stuart. She had taken a lively interest in Bothwell's marriage ; she signed the contract for the union ; she presented the bride with a costly wedding-dress ; the ceremony took place in the royal chapel at Holyrood. She played a conspicuous part in all the festivities ; and it is unthinkable that she had no knowledge of a document which was such an important accessory in the mating of a Catholic woman with a Protestant husband.

Then why was it not produced at the time ? Only Lady Jean Gordon could give an answer to that question. Perhaps she was glad to be free from Bothwell ; perhaps the Queen had persuaded her to keep silence. Besides, there was her brother's bargain with Bothwell ; he was to be restored to his forfeited estates on the condition that the divorce was unopposed. And so Lady Jean Gordon hid the dispensation so safely that it was not brought to light again until more than three centuries had passed away.

Lady Bothwell having procured her divorce on the 3rd of May, and Bothwell's own process having been committed to compliant hands, there was no reason why the imprisonment farce being enacted at Dunbar Castle should be any longer continued. So Bothwell and Mary set out for Edinburgh once more, and the citizens were entertained with the spectacle of the earl marching on foot at the bridle of the Queen's horse as the procession made its way into the castle. To give a still more convincing aspect of amity to the proceedings, Bothwell's

soldiers had cast away their spears before they entered the city.

On the day subsequent to this peaceful return the reverend court of the Archbishop pronounced its decree, and nothing remained save to proclaim the banns of the Queen and her lover without further delay.

But an unexpected obstacle arose. In the absence of John Knox, the duty of proclaiming the banns devolved upon his colleague, John Craig, and when Mary sent her servant to require him to announce her marriage with Bothwell he stoutly refused. Such a verbal command, Craig said, was not sufficient authority; besides, it was common report that Earl Bothwell had ravished the Queen and kept her in captivity. And when, the following day, Mary's justice-clerk brought Craig a letter, subscribed with her own hand, stating that she was neither ravished nor kept in captivity, he answered that he had no authority to proclaim any banns without the consent of the kirk-session.

Next day, then, there was a meeting of the kirk-session. The discussion was long and animated. In the end a compromise was reached; Craig would proclaim the banns on the Queen's authority, but on no account would the kirk-session solemnize or approve the marriage.

From his pulpit in St. Giles's Church, therefore, Craig, on the day following, gave a full account of all that had happened, and demanded of the lords present their consent to his facing Bothwell in the Privy Council; failing their agreement, he would

refuse to proceed with the proclamation. The dauntless minister had his way ; the same afternoon he was admitted to the Privy Council, and there boldly rebuked Bothwell to his face. He laid to his charge the law of adultery, the law of ravishing, the suspicion of collusion between him and his wife, the sudden divorce and proclaiming within four days, and the suspicion of the King's death, which his marriage would confirm. "But," Craig reported, "he answered nothing to my satisfaction."

Nor had Craig sufficiently relieved his conscience by that daring impeachment. Sunday came, and the worshippers in St. Giles's heard the whole sordid story over again. In solemn tones Craig told his hearers how their Queen and Bothwell were determined to proceed to their marriage despite all.

"I take heaven and earth to witness," he continued, "that I abhor and detest this marriage, because it is odious and slanderous to the world."

Those brave words reached Bothwell's ears, and Craig was summoned before the Council once more. He had passed the bounds of his commission, he was told, in calling the Queen's marriage odious and slanderous before the world.

"The bounds of my commission," Craig retorted, "which are the Word of God, good laws, and natural reason, are able to prove what I spoke. Your own consciences must bear witness that such a marriage will be odious and slanderous to all that hear of it, if all the circumstances of it are rightly——"

But Bothwell had heard enough. "Silence!" he

shouted ; and the fearless preacher was incontinently thrust out of the Council chamber.

And now it was high time to consummate the marriage. On the 12th of May, then, Mary left Edinburgh Castle for her palace at Holyrood, but on her way she paused at the Tolbooth. And there, in the presence of her Lord Chancellor and numerous Lords of Session, she declared that although she had been annoyed at the conduct of the Earl Bothwell in taking her captive, yet, because of his good behaviour and remembrance of his great services, she had forgiven him, and did forgive him and all his accomplices. She also declared herself to be at "freedom and liberty," and announced her intention to promote the Earl Bothwell to "further honours for his service aforesaid." That same evening, in Holyrood Palace, Mary redeemed her pledge by creating her lover Duke of Orkney, and placing the coronet on his head with her own hands.

One important matter, however, had still to be arranged. This was the drafting of a formal marriage contract such as could be entered in the records of the realm. It was a lengthy document, far less delicate in its wording than the simple bond which the two had subscribed more than a month earlier at Seton. And it had to be so framed as to extenuate the hastiness of the union.

After an exordium which magnified the person and offices of the "right noble and potent Prince, James, Duke of Orkney," and a reference to the necessity of succession to the throne being

“produced” of the Queen’s royal person, the contract proceeded :

“And now Her Majesty, being destitute of a husband, living solitary in the state of widowhood, and yet young and of flourishing age, apt and able to procreate more children, has been pressed and humbly required to yield unto some marriage. Which petition, Her Grace weighing and taking in good part, but chiefly regarding the preservation and continuance of her posterity, has condescended thereto.”

Then followed the explanation of how Bothwell had had the good fortune to be the object of her choice. She had been urged to so far humble herself as to accept one of her own subjects instead of a “foreign Prince,” on the plea that a native of Scotland would be more accustomed to the laws and manners of the country, and among those subjects the Duke of Orkney had been recommended as having claims far in advance of his fellow-nobles.

“Wherefore the said excellent and mighty Princess and Queen, and the said noble and potent Prince, James, Duke of Orkney, shall, God willing, solemnize and complete the bond of matrimony, each of them with the other, in the face of Holy Church, with all goodly diligence.”

Such diligence, indeed, that the ceremony was appointed for the following day, the 15th of May.

One glimpse into the interior of Holyrood Palace on the wedding eve has been granted us by the pen of Sir James Melville. He had not been often at Court since he was released from Dunbar on the

morning after Mary's seizure, but he dropped into Holyrood the evening before the marriage. He found Bothwell sitting at his supper with Huntly and a few other companions. The bridegroom elect was in a genial mood.

"What a stranger you are!" he said, as he bade Melville welcome, and invited him to sit down and sup with him.

Melville said he had already supped; but Bothwell called for a cup of wine, and drank to his visitor, saying:

"You had need grow fatter, for the zeal of the commonwealth hath eaten you up, and made you lean."

"Every little member should serve for some use," Melville answered, "but the care of the commonwealth appertains most to you and the rest of the nobility, who should be as fathers to the same."

"Ah," replied Bothwell, "I will find a pin for every bore."

And then, Melville added, Bothwell began to "speak of gentlewomen, and indulged in such filthy language" that he was glad to make his escape to the Queen.

At an unconscionable hour the next morning—four o'clock—the marriage was duly performed. It was a strange ceremony for a Royal wedding. The officiating minister was the apostate Bishop of Orkney, for John Craig had kept his vow to refuse his services; and of the nobility there were few present. The form used was that of the Protestant Church, and the Bishop of Orkney improved the

occasion by preaching a lengthy sermon on the second chapter of Genesis, concluding with an announcement of Bothwell's penitence for his past vicious life. As when she married Darnley, Mary was attired in mourning. And at this wedding, as a contemporary chronicler wrote, "there was neither pleasure nor pastime as were wont to be when Princes were married."

When the Queen returned to her chamber she at once sent for the Bishop of Ross. He found her, he said, in tears. And then she "unlocked the secret of her heart to him, and vowed that never again would she do anything opposed to the rites of the Catholic Church."

That night, too, a placard was affixed to the palace-gate of Holyrood. It bore a line from Ovid, averring that only bad women married in the month of May :

"Mense malas Maio nubere vulgus ait."

Mary Stuart was a wife once more ; she had won surcease from impending shame ; but now, the danger past, the strain relaxed, inevitable reaction followed. Hence her "many tears" as she unlocked the secrets of her heart to the Bishop of Ross ; hence her cry to du Croq, "I wish for nothing but death" ; hence her exclamation that if she were not given a knife to stab herself, she would drown herself. And there were moments when her old jealousy made her miserable, and when Bothwell in turn resented her favours to others.

But that mood soon passed. A day or two after the wedding Mary cast off her mourning for raiment

of brighter hue ; the two often rode abroad together, and Bothwell would insist upon going uncovered until she snatched his cap and placed it on his head ; and by-and-by there were pageants and tourneys to give the citizens other food for thought than the late o'er-hasty wedding. The mint, too, was set to work to coin money for household and soldierly expenses, and everything promised well, save that there was an ominous absence of the nobility. "The Court increases not of one nobleman more than were at the marriage" is the report of one day, to be followed a little later by "the Court is now but small," and "the trains of the Queen and Duke, besides the soldiers, are but few."

Meanwhile, what of the outer world ? The Courts of France and England had to be officially informed of the wedding, for Mary was the Queen-Dowager of the one country, and claimed to be heir to the crown of the other. Of course, the news of her marriage had flown apace to Paris and London, but she had not yet dispatched any messenger of her own.

Mary's delay in attending to such an important matter is not difficult to understand. It was a delicate and arduous task to concoct a convincing explanation. There were so many things to extenuate. Perhaps, then, it is hardly surprising that it was not until the 27th of May, twelve days after the wedding, that a messenger set out for France. He had been wisely chosen, for he was none other than William Chisholm, that Catholic Bishop of Dunblane who had been described by John Knox as "one of the

pillars of the Papistical Kirk." He had been employed before on several of Mary's missions, and had assisted the Right Reverend Archbishop of St. Andrews in effecting Bothwell's divorce from Lady Jean Gordon.

Rarely can an Ambassador have been primed with more exhaustive instructions than those which were prepared for the guidance of the Bishop of Dunblane. He was, in the first place, to apologize to the King and Queen-Mother of France that Mary had not been the first to inform them of her wedding, and then to dwell at length upon Bothwell's career. He was to dilate upon his many services to the realm, his faithfulness to his Queen, his exploits as an enemy of England, and the misfortune he had had to incur the envy of his fellow peers. Next the Bishop was instructed to explain how Bothwell had captured the Queen, how he pressed his suit upon her, how he showed her the bond of the nobility in favour of his marrying her, and how at last she was constrained to yield to his importunity, and the wishes of her "whole nobility and estates."

And to prepare him for awkward questions and objections the Bishop was further instructed what he was to answer in case exception was taken to the lawfulness of the marriage, and to rest finally on this :

"Now since it is past, and cannot be brought back again, we will make the best of it, and it must be thought, as it is in effect, that he is our husband, whom we will both love and honour, so that all

who profess themselves to be our friends must profess the like friendship towards him who is inseparably joined with us."

Mary, of course, had a representative at the French Court—namely, the upright Archbishop of Glasgow, who had written her so faithfully, and the Bishop of Dunblane was strictly charged to discuss everything with the Archbishop before he sought an interview at the Court. That there might be no divergence between the two, Mary and Bothwell both wrote special letters to the Archbishop himself. The letter of Bothwell was half-apologetic; he admitted that the business was "strange," and that the Queen might have married a man of "greater birth and estimation," but he was confident that she could not have chosen one who was more affectionately inclined to do her service and honour. He relied, he said, upon Beaton's "wisdom and diligent care" in presenting the case, and in making the "excuses be taken in good part."

Mary's own letter to Archbishop Beaton reveals a greater anxiety. The event was "strange," no doubt, and otherwise than Beaton could have anticipated; "but as it is succeeded we must make the best of it, and so, for our respect, must all that love us." She prayed him, then, to "earnestly and effectually" devote his "study, ingenuity, and effectual labours in the ordering of this present message, and in the persuading them to whom it is directed to believe that it is the very truth." And finally she relied upon his "dexterity and faithful

travail" for this once, promising to give him "no further occasion" while she lived.

Far briefer were the instructions handed to Robert Melville when he was dispatched to announce the marriage to Queen Elizabeth. The eulogy of Bothwell was less detailed, and his enmity to England ignored; neither was there a word about the seizure of the Queen and her captivity in Dunbar Castle; the haste of the marriage was excused on the ground of the disturbed state of the country, the request of the nobles that it might be effected, and "diverse advertisements from France." If Elizabeth objected that Bothwell was suspected of Darnley's murder, Melville was to reply that the earl had been acquitted by the law and Parliament; and as to Bothwell's wife, why, that union had been dissolved for adequate reasons.

Robert Melville also carried with him a letter from Bothwell to Queen Elizabeth, in which that noble expressed his determination to use his utmost power to continue the good friendship which existed between his wife and the English Queen. No more than Mary herself did Bothwell suspect that in agreeing to act as envoy to the English Court Melville was playing a double game; that he had, in fact, been for several weeks in communication with Elizabeth's chief minister to ascertain how far the English Queen would support those Scottish lords who were anxious to revenge Darnley's death and break Bothwell's power.

And yet Bothwell seems to have had a premonition that all was not well. Since the morning after

Ainslie's supper, when the chief nobles had hurriedly left Edinburgh, few peers of note had returned to the Court. Du Croq reported that although the Queen summoned them they would not come. He, as the Ambassador from France, was in a difficult position ; he would not recognize Bothwell as Mary's husband, and if he favoured his enemies he would be acting contrary to his office in relation to the Queen ; "it will be better for me," he wrote, "to withdraw myself, and leave them to play out their game."

No doubt Mary and Bothwell took anxious counsel together over the situation, and for issue a proclamation was made on the 28th of May commanding noblemen, knights, esquires, gentlemen, and yeomen, to meet the Queen at Melrose on the 12th of June. They were to come in warlike array, with six days' victuals, and accompany the Queen and her husband on an expedition against the marauders of Liddesdale.

But as the days went by there were no signs of preparation to obey that summons. The suspicion grew that the nobles and knights and their retainers were wanted for some other purpose than a raid on the outlaws of Liddesdale. Soon, too, dark rumours reached Bothwell's ears that the lords were plotting rebellion. And at last, on the night of the 6th of June, Maitland was missing from Holyrood. The significance of his desertion was not lost on Bothwell. Mischief must be a-brewing when he could no longer count upon that fellow-conspirator. Early the next day, then, Bothwell and Mary, accompanied

by a handful of soldiers and attendants, rode away from Holyrood and halted not till they reached Borthwick Castle, a sturdy square fortalice some twelve miles from Edinburgh.

And never more was Mary Stuart to hold Court as an unfettered Queen in the palace of her royal ancestors.

CHAPTER IV

THE LORDS

WIFE, widow, and wife again, all within the compass of ninety-five days—it was that indecent haste, added to the belief that the hands of the new husband were stained with the blood of the old, which caused the news of Mary Stuart's marriage to Bothwell to be received with unqualified disgust. Contemporary opinion, public and private, Protestant and Catholic, denounced the union as tarnishing the fame of Scotland and debasing the reputation of its Queen.

Less than a week after the wedding a letter was on its way from England to Scotland declaring that whoever was guilty of Darnley's murder "handfasted with adultery" was unworthy to live. "Your whole nation," the writer said, "is blemished and defamed by these doings which lately passed among you." And of that nation the one held most to blame was the Sovereign herself.

"I know not one, no, not one of any quality or estate in this country," the indictment concluded, "which does allow of the Queen your Sovereign, but would gladly the world were rid of her."

An exception should have been made in favour

of Queen Elizabeth. She held such high opinions of the inviolability of anointed Princes that she would not allow mere subjects to pass judgments on their Sovereigns; but even she "detested" Mary's doings, and was "ashamed" of her.

Robert Melville's explanation failed to satisfy her.

"To be plain with you," she wrote, "our grief has not been small thereat: for how could a worse choice be made for your honour than in such haste to marry such a subject who, besides other notorious lacks, public fame has charged with the murder of your late husband, besides touching yourself in some part, though we trust in that behalf falsely. And with what peril have you married him, that hath another lawful wife alive, whereby neither by God's law nor man's yourself can be his lawful wife nor any children betwixt you legitimate?"

Warnings had been poured into Mary's ears up to the eve of her fatal step. Du Croq, the grave, discreet Ambassador from France, who had befriended her more than she knew, urged her to break with Bothwell and abandon her resolve to marry him, assuring her that if she did not she would have neither friendship nor favour from France. De Silva, too, the Spanish Ambassador in London, when the rumour of the impending marriage reached him, thought too highly of Mary to believe it. His informant was, he knew, a "person of credit," but, he added, "it seems impossible." When the rumour became fact, he was stunned. He could only sorrow with those who saw what evils would follow in the train of such an alliance.

Pitiable, then, was the task of the unfortunate Bishop of Dunblane when he appeared before the Court of France to offer explanations and excuses on behalf of the Scottish Queen. Not that that Court was a model of righteousness or propriety. Its chief figures were the youthful Charles IX., the Queen-Mother, Catherine de Medici, and Mary Stuart's two uncles, the Duke of Guise and the Cardinal of Lorraine. Truly a tribunal which should have been lenient to such a message as that which the Bishop of Dunblane had to deliver. For Catherine de Medici had no moral sense, was soon to embrue her hands in the blood of Coligny and the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and never hesitated to sacrifice the chastity of her female attendants to her State-craft. And of the Cardinal of Lorraine did not Brantôme declare that few or none of his women visitors quitted his Court with their honour ? While the Court itself included many women who had miniatures of their lovers painted inside their prayer-books in the semblance of the Sufferer on the Cross, and men who had their missals adorned with the portraits of their mistresses in the character and dress of the Virgin.

Nevertheless, the Bishop of Dunblane prepared his speech as though it were to be addressed to a moral audience. It was a long oration, carefully elaborated, and he strove to show that from her birth onward the Queen of Scotland had been the sport of an inconstant and doubtful fate.

“And even this marriage,” he said, “celebrated according to the Huguenot rite, was brought about

rather by destiny and necessity than by her choice."

But it was labour wasted. He was heard to the end of his lengthy apology, though his auditors could not refrain contemptuous smiles ; and when he had finished, he was reminded that it was idle to attribute to force such results as were brought about by free will and premeditated determination. Not even, then, in a Court so licentious and tolerant of assassination as that of France could excuse be found for such a marriage.

And the Venetian Ambassador in Paris foresaw how the union would affect the old faith :

"The Catholic religion," he wrote, "which in Scotland had no greater foundation than the good intention evinced always by that Queen to support it, now remains according to general opinion deprived of all hope of ever again raising its head, because she, without fear of God, or respect for the world, has allowed herself to be induced by sensuality to take one who cannot be her husband."

Mary's new marriage was, indeed, a staggering blow to Catholicism. Two years earlier Philip of Spain had acclaimed the Queen of Scots the "Champion of God," and declared that for England as well as Scotland she was "the sole gate through which religion can be restored"; all the rest were closed.

For several months Vincenzo Laureo, the Bishop of Mondovi, had been waiting in Paris for a message which should summon him to Mary Stuart's Court. The Pope had appointed him as a special nuncio to

the Scottish Queen, but pending the completion of arrangements for his reception he tarried in the French capital. Ere those arrangements were perfected his plans were thrown into chaos by the news of Darnley's murder, and it was not long ere he began to dread that Mary might take some "wild resolve," such as marrying the Earl Bothwell.

Then came the fatal news. The Queen, he reported, had not been able to restrain her "undue affection" for Bothwell. His mission was at an end.

"With this last act," he wrote, "so dishonourable to God and to herself, the propriety of sending her any sort of envoy ceases, unless, indeed, Her Majesty, in order to amend her errors, should, inspired by God, convert the earl to the Catholic faith. But of these things my desire is greater than my hope, especially as one cannot, as a rule, expect much from those who are swayed by their pleasures."

In due course the news reached the supreme head of the Church. All the letters of the Catholic messengers and prelates concerned in the mission were laid before the Pope and carefully considered. And then His Holiness pronounced verdict.

"With regard to the Queen of Scots," he bade his secretary write, "it is not his intention to have any further communication with her, unless, indeed, in times to come he shall see some better sign of her life and religion than he has witnessed in the past."

And for two years the Pope had no correspondence with Bothwell's wife.

But in the meantime he and she alike had to face more practical and urgent matters.

For the moment they were safe in Borthwick Castle. That massive building, the solid ruins of which still bear witness to its ancient strength, was situated some twelve miles south-east of Edinburgh, and occupied an admirable site for defensive purposes. Built on a tongue of land jutting into the middle of a valley between two streams, it was surrounded on three of its sides by steep ground and water, and encompassed by a wall defended with square and round towers. The castle itself was modelled on the pattern of the Norman keep, and its walls were fourteen feet thick in the lower floors. Before the use of artillery it must have been impregnable.

Nor was the castle less fit to be the residence of a Queen. Unlike many of the Scottish baronial homes of the period, its numerous apartments offered comfort and even luxury as well as security, while the great hall was a truly noble chamber fifty feet in length by thirty-three in width. Although time has laid its eroding hand on the beautiful sculptured fireplace and the enriched canopies of the screen and sideboard niche, the walls of the hall and the facing of its high vaulted roof are almost as perfect as though fresh from the builders' hands. It is not difficult for the imagination to repair the ravages of the centuries, reclothe the hall in tapestries, and call back the scene it presented on that June evening of 1567, when Mary Stuart and Bothwell became its unexpected guests.

Bothwell, however, did not tarry long. Either the same night or early the following morning he rode away with fifty arquebusiers. Matters had come to a perilous pass ; he realized now why the lords and knights had given so few signs of preparing to answer their Queen's call to arms ; and it behoved him to make a desperate effort to gather his own friends together or warn them in person that he would speedily need their services in war-like array.

On the third day, however—that is, on Tuesday, the 10th of June—he rejoined Mary in Borthwick Castle. All had been quiet during his absence ; perhaps the danger was imaginary or would soon blow over.

But that same night there came a rude awakening. Bothwell, so one story said, was preparing for bed, when the silence of the castle was suddenly broken by shouts without the walls. And it was quickly reported that the cries came from a large party of men who implored admission into the castle on the plea that they were being chased by the Queen's enemies. But Bothwell was not to be caught by such a ruse ; in a flash he realized that his foes were upon him, and that, in the absence of cannon and a sufficient force of men, his only policy was to escape and await the opportunity to meet his enemies on more even terms.

Quickly deciding upon his scheme, then, and having discussed plans with the Queen, he called to his side the young Master of Crookston, and the two slipped out through a postern ere yet the forces

of the insurgent lords had encircled the castle. It was a narrow escape. So narrow, indeed, that in a temporary parting the young Master of Crookston actually fell into the enemy's hands. He, in the terror of the moment, told his captors the direction Bothwell had taken, but they did not believe him.

Incredulous at first that their prey had escaped them, the lords, thinking Bothwell to be still in the castle, cried upon him to come out and maintain his challenge. "Traitor! Murderer! Butcher!" were some of the epithets hurled at the impassive walls. And when Mary herself appeared at one of the windows they greeted her with still coarser words, to be answered with defiance.

Convinced at last that Bothwell really had escaped, the besiegers withdrew, and decided to seize the capital.

Early the next morning, then, the insurgents, who were led by the Earl Morton and Lords Home and Lindsay, appeared before the St. Mary Gate of Edinburgh and demanded admission. It was neither granted nor denied. The gate was fast shut, it is true, but when the assailants climbed over the wall and then proceeded to break open the gate, they met with no opposition, for the citizens were in a quandary. Of the Queen's friends there were in the city only Huntly, Lord Boyd, and a couple of Bishops, and even they had taken refuge in the castle with Sir James Balfour. He, who was in command of the castle, was sitting on the fence, not yet having made up his mind to throw off his allegiance to Bothwell or cast in his lot with the rebel

lords. For the moment he befriended both sides, affording Huntly and his companions a haven and refraining from firing the castle guns on the invaders.

Now the portal destroyed by the lords opened upon a district of the city called the Canongate, which consisted mainly of one wide street in the vicinity of Holyrood Palace. Content for the time being with having secured possession of so much of the city, the leaders called a halt, and proceeded to constitute themselves into a council. The next step, of course, was to emit a proclamation. It was a somewhat lengthy document, but in substance it was a demand for the assistance of all subjects of the realm in the threefold task of delivering the Queen "now detained in thraldom," of preserving "the Prince's most gracious person," and of purging the commonwealth of the "most cruel and abominable murder" of the King. Incidentally, the document remarked that the whole realm of Scotland was "slanderous and abominable to all nations," that the country was in a "miserable estate," and that all "manner of corruption and vice" abounded. And the readers of the proclamation were informed that if they refused to assemble under the lords' banner, they would be held traitors to their Prince, and punished with death.

Seeing that the lords were supported by a force of some two thousand armed men, their edict was doubtless read with due respect by the citizens of Edinburgh; besides, it is highly probable that the majority of those citizens warmly approved the pro-

gramme it set forth. At any rate, no serious opposition was offered, and ere the day was out a copy of the proclamation was duly affixed to the market-cross.

And the following day another proclamation was posted in the same place. This, which was emitted in the names of the lords of the secret council and nobility, went a step further than its predecessor. After entering more minutely into the misdeeds of Bothwell, and attributing to him a resolve to murder the infant Prince, it commanded heralds to pass to the chief cities and charge all subjects to hasten to the lords to assist them in delivering "the Queen's most noble person forth of captivity and prison," etc. Within four hours, too, after the publication of that act, all Bothwell's friends, and those citizens who declined to lend their aid to the enterprise, were bidden to "void and rid themselves" out of Edinburgh with all speed. Obviously, it was high time for Huntly and his companions to be gone; and as soon as Sir James Balfour had seen them slip safely away, he felt free to declare himself and the castle on the side of the insurgent lords.

Having usurped the government of the country, the lords promptly proceeded to exercise their powers. They dispatched officers through the city with drums to offer five pounds a month to all who would enlist under their banner, and that they might have the money needful for the recompense of such recruits, they took forcible possession of the mint and its coining apparatus.

One thing more was necessary—an actual banner

for the army. The preparation of this was undertaken by a Captain Andrew Lammie, who seems to have had a keen appreciation of what would appeal to the populace. Procuring, then, a large piece of white taffety—so large that two poles were necessary for its display—he painted thereon an exceedingly effective design. In the centre stood a green tree, and on the one side lay the body of a dead man, representative of the murdered Darnley ; the space on the other side of the tree was filled in with the figure of a kneeling infant, from whose lips proceeded the prayer: “Judge and revenge my cause, O Lord !” Such was the standard carried by the insurgent army in their marchings and counter-marchings of the next few days. It was an illuminated commentary on their excuse for taking arms against the Queen.

But what of Mary Stuart in the meantime, that distressed Sovereign whose “most noble person” was held in “captivity and prison”?

That Wednesday morning, when the lords were so busy with their proclamations and other matters, John Beaton, the brother of the faithful Archbishop of Glasgow, rode over to Borthwick Castle to ascertain how the Queen fared. If he had placed any credence in the lords’ two proclamations, he must have been considerably astonished with the state of affairs. There were no obvious signs of “thraldom” and “captivity and prison.” The castle was nearly deserted. He found Mary “so quiet that there were not with her above six or seven persons.” Had the lords been anxious to rescue their Queen, or she been

pining in “thraldom,” what was to hinder a bloodless relief or an easy escape? She, however, had that very day dispatched a messenger to Sir James Balfour ordering him to keep the castle in her name, and drive the rebel lords out of the city.

That night, too, Mary Stuart had an appointment with Bothwell. She was to meet him about a mile away; and, lest there should be any of the lords' followers hovering around, she discarded her woman's dress for man's attire, “booted and spurred,” and so reached the rendezvous in safety. It was late at night, so late that her ride through the darkness with Bothwell and a few faithful companions did not end until three o'clock the next morning. At that hour they drew rein in the courtyard of Dunbar Castle.

Now, in the year 1567, Dunbar Castle was one of the chief strongholds of Scotland. Built by the side of the sea, its foundations dovetailed into the hard whinstone of that rocky coast, and approachable only on the landward side, it was a fortress impregnable to any assault save that of the most powerful artillery. Here, too, were kept large stores of gunpowder, arms, and cannon. The jagged ruins which are all that remain to-day give but a faint idea of its former strength, though sufficient fragments survive to show how the castle was once as impervious as the whinstone crags on which it was built. Deliberate demolition and the erosion of the mighty breakers of the wild North Sea have not even yet wholly destroyed the fortress in which

Mary Stuart and Bothwell took refuge while they prepared to meet their foes.

Despite their midnight ride from Borthwick Castle, the new day had to be spent in busy toil. Many letters had to be written and dispatched far and near, a plan of campaign decided upon, arms and artillery overhauled, and the country around scoured to bring in all who were willing to march under the royal banner.

And when Saturday dawned such good progress had been made towards gathering an army that it was decided to make an attempt to recapture Edinburgh from the lords. The march, however, was to be made by easy stages—it would be sufficient for that day to proceed as far as Seton, whence the capital could be more easily assaulted on the morrow. To Seton, then, a place of so many conflicting memories for Mary and Bothwell alike, the army marched; and when camp had been formed a proclamation was issued in the name of the Queen.

A number of conspirators, that document stated, had manifested their latent malice to her and her husband by attempting to capture their persons at Borthwick, and by the subsequent issue of a seditious proclamation, pretending in the latter that their object was to revenge the murder of the King, rescue the Queen from captivity, and preserve the infant Prince. All of which were “false and forged inventions.”

As to her present husband, the proclamation continued, he had been absolved by justice and had offered to maintain that quarrel against any gentle-

man on earth undefamed, “than which nothing more could be desired.”

She was not a captive, she declared, and her marriage had been publicly contracted and solemnized; while as for the infant Prince, was he not at that very moment in the hands of the men who pretended such anxiety for his preservation? Seeing, then, that “very necessity” had forced her to take arms for the defence of her life, she was confident that those who had answered her summons would with good hearts “stand to her defence.”

And as the lords had promised five pounds a month to their recruits, Mary pledged her word that those who fought in her behalf should be generously recompensed from the lands and possessions of the rebels. Nay, she appears to have sanctioned a sliding scale of remuneration, guaranteeing a forty-pound land to every man who should slay an earl, a twenty-pound land for the dispatch of a lord, and a ten-pound land for every dead baron.

Meanwhile the lords had not been idle. The streets of Edinburgh bore the aspect of a warlike camp. Horsemen and footmen passed to and fro; the clash of armour and the call of the trumpet resounded at all hours of the day and night. Now my Lord Home and four hundred troopers rode out of the city on a reconnaissance; anon the Laird of Tullibardine and a hundred horsemen sallied forth in another direction to meet some promised reinforcements; and at frequent intervals special messengers rode off in haste carrying urgent summons from the lords.

One such summons was borne to Lord Grey. It was signed by Morton and Mar and several other of the confederates, and told how the writers had taken arms to relieve their country of the “shameful slander it has incurred among all nations.”

“This action concerns your lordship,” the letter continued, “and all that tender the commonweal and establishment of the religion; wherefore we pray you to repair to this town, substantially accompanied with your honest friends and servants.”

Evidently the leaders of the rebellion were anxious. Failure meant confiscation of estates and death. The balance hovered between patriotism and treason.

And where were Mary and Bothwell, and what force had they at their command? Lord Home returned from his reconnoitre no wiser than when he left the city. He had ridden in the direction of Borthwick Castle, but could not learn anything of the whereabouts of the “captive” Queen and her husband.

At midnight on Saturday, however, a messenger hurried into Edinburgh with the news that Mary and Bothwell had left Dunbar and were on their way to the city. Then there was no time to lose. Trumpeters were at once dispatched through the streets to sound the call to arms; the captains hastily buckled on their armour; and, under the impression that the Queen’s forces were not far distant, the rebel host was marched out of the city on foot. In a sense, however, it was a false alarm; the enemy was not so near as had been imagined; so the horses were sent for and the march resumed eastward.

It was a motley assembly. On foot marched some two hundred Edinburgh craftsmen, hastily armed, but in their workaday garb, and with them another two hundred footmen of more soldierly mien; but the main body consisted of eighteen hundred horsemen, the retainers chiefly of the lords who had ventured on the enterprise. The leaders included the Earls Morton, Mar, Atholl, and Glencairn, and the Lords Home, Lindsay, and Ruthven. There rode with them, too, that intrepid soldier, Sir William Kirk-caldy of Grange, who had borne the chief share in marshalling the forces for the field.

On and on through the darkness the rebel army moved. And by-and-by the faint light of a summer Sabbath dawn suffused the eastern sky, quickly gathering strength and glinting the spears and armour and the white taffety banner with its dead King and praying infant. The sun arose serene and cloudless, harbinger of a day of fierce light and exhausting heat. And when the town of Musselborough was reached and occupied a halt was called for rest and refreshment. Ere long, too, some of the scouts returned and reported that the Queen and her army were but a mile distant.

For Mary Stuart, too, had risen betimes that Sabbath morning. Bothwell's plan had been to march on Edinburgh that day and try conclusions with the lords ere ever they had had time to gather an overwhelming force. And so it came to pass that the two armies had marched towards each other and came into touch about midway between Seton and Edinburgh.

So far as numbers went there was little to choose between the two forces. Some two thousand men in all had rallied to the standard of the Queen, but the majority of them were "commons." That is, they had come from the fields and workshops, and were little accustomed to bear arms or wield them. No earl was of the company, but the Lords Seton, Yester, and Borthwick had followed their Queen, and there were many lairds, mostly Bothwell's friends. But Mary could count upon two hundred arquebusiers, and the fighting force of her army was strengthened by six brass cannon brought from Dunbar.

She herself rode forth that dawn in a strange array. Having left all her own clothes at Borthwick Castle, and not having any emergency wardrobe at Dunbar and Seton, she had been obliged to borrow a costume "after the fashion of the women of Edinburgh," which consisted of a short tunic and a red petticoat that barely covered her knees. And for headgear she wore a velvet hat and muffler.

Bothwell was early informed of the approach of the rebel army, and he immediately hastened the movements of his own force. He knew that not far distant stood Carberry Hill with the remains of the earthworks thrown up at the Battle of Pinkie, and that position his rapid march forward enabled him to seize. It gave him the additional advantage of having the hot June sun behind his back and shining full upon the ranks of his enemies. And in the disposition of his cannon and untrained soldiers, as the French Ambassador du Croq noted, he proved him-

self to be no mean general. To keep his foes at bay, too, he fired upon their skirmishers and drove them back to their base.

By eight o'clock that Sabbath morning, then, the two armies faced each other in battle array, the royal standard of Scotland fluttering lazily over the ranks of the Queen's followers, and the white taffety ensign of the rebels a conspicuous object amid their spears. At any moment the grim struggle might begin.

But at that juncture the French Ambassador appeared on the scene. Du Croq had a difficult rôle to play. He was the representative of a country which had been allied to Scotland for many generations, and his doings that day might decide whether in future the northern kingdom would be lost to the friendship of France and gained for England. He was the Ambassador of the French Court to the Queen of Scotland, and he owed her his first duty ; but he saw that Queen deserted by all the chief nobles of her kingdom, members of her Privy Council, and men who, if they succeeded, would henceforth become the chief rulers of the land.

For several days past he had been in frequent communication with the lords in Edinburgh, and now it devolved upon him to make a final attempt at reconciliation. With Mary's approval he rode to the confederates' camp, and was received by the Earls Morton and Glencairn. He had come, he said, to see if it were possible to adjust the quarrel without bloodshed. Notwithstanding all that had passed, the Queen was their Sovereign, but she was in favour

of peace, and would give them her pardon if they laid down their arms.

"We have not taken arms against the Queen," replied Morton, "but against the murderer of the King. If Her Majesty will give him up to be punished, or remove herself from his company, she will find in us a continuance of all dutiful obedience."

And Glencairn had something to add.

"As for pardon," he said, "we are not come here to ask pardon for any offence we have done, but rather to give pardon to those who have offended."

With a heavy heart du Croq rode back to Mary. She was seated on a stone, and for a moment Bothwell was not near. Hardly, however, had the Ambassador reported the result of his mission than Bothwell returned, and, raising his voice so that it might be heard by his followers, asked:

"Is it me with whom they quarrel? I have never injured any of them, and what they do now they do out of envy."

Du Croq replied that the lords had just professed in his hearing their continued loyalty to the Queen, and, he added, dropping his voice to a whisper, "of their mortal enmity to your lordship."

To this Bothwell replied that, out of deep sympathy with the Queen's painful position, he was willing to try the issue by single combat with any his equal in rank, and asked du Croq to report as much to the lords. If the cause were tried otherwise, he advised the Ambassador to remain and witness the battle, for he would never live to see a braver fight.

Mary, however, would not hear of any single combat. "The quarrel is mine," she said, "and the rebels must surrender or hazard the fortune of battle." And with that du Croq had to be content. He rode back to the lords, delivered his message, and returned to Edinburgh.

And still neither side opened the attack. The lords knew they had the worse position; Kirkcaldy for one had had sufficient experience of warfare to realize the strength of Bothwell's entrenchment; and Bothwell was too wary a soldier to give up his advantage by advancing to the attack. The sun, too, had mounted high in the heavens, and, shining with full radiance and heat on the rebel forces at the bottom of the hill, was a not inconsiderable factor in the lassitude of the lords' army. They "temperized," wrote an eyewitness of the scene, "for the day was very hot, and they had the sun in their face."

Nor were Mary and Bothwell other than satisfied to thus gain time. Urgent messages had been sent to their friends to hasten to their aid, and they had good reason to believe that considerable reinforcements were drawing near. The Lords Herries and Lochinvar had sent word that they would join the Queen at the appointed rendezvous.

But they came not. And as the afternoon wore on the inaction and uncertainty wrought its effect on Bothwell's followers. Food and drink had been forgotten in the hurry of the march, and the few casks of wine brought from Seton were barely sufficient for the Queen and Bothwell, and the lords

and lairds. So many of the rank and file slipped away in little groups in search of water, and one party strayed so far afield that it was captured by the rebel outposts.

Such signs of waning enthusiasm would not escape Bothwell's eyes, and when, a little later, he saw Kirkcaldy at the head of two hundred horsemen making a move to outflank his position, he realized that action of some kind could not be much longer delayed. Nor was the significance of these things lost upon Mary herself. As a last hope she sent a flag of truce to ask that Kirkcaldy might come and speak with her. The invitation was accepted, but all that Kirkcaldy could say was that the lords were willing to give her obedience provided she abandoned "the murderer of the King."

To this Bothwell at once answered that he was willing to offer combat to any who would maintain that he had murdered the King.

That challenge led to further delay. Who would accept it? There was no lack of volunteers in the lords' camp. The first to come forward was the Laird of Tullibardine, but his offer was scornfully rejected by Mary and Bothwell on the ground of his mean rank. And the same objection was urged in the case of Kirkcaldy himself. Then Bothwell made his choice: let the Earl Morton come forth; he would fight him. But now the lords themselves objected, and Lord Lindsay offered himself as a substitute.

Bothwell was willing, and Lindsay, so the story goes, was in the act of preparing for the fray, falling

on his knees to invoke the Divine favour, when Mary herself changed her mind.

“He is my husband,” she cried; “he shall not fight with any of them.”

But another of the conflicting accounts of that day affirms that it was the lords themselves who withdrew from the challenge. The quarrel was theirs as well as Lord Lindsay’s, they said, and they could not allow him to take the whole burden on his shoulders.

Now by this time the afternoon was spent and evening drawing on. And the wearisome delay had greatly thinned the ranks of Bothwell’s followers. As the lords’ forces were the besiegers and had no enemy in their rear they had been able to refresh themselves with food and drink, and hence were as unbroken an army as when they had taken up their position. But many of Bothwell’s foragers had not returned, and he and Mary saw that if the lords advanced to the attack it would be difficult, if not impossible, to repel them.

So those two took counsel together. It was the mensal of their wedding-day; a month ago, no more, they had been declared man and wife. What obstacles they had surmounted, what friendships they had ruined, what hostages they had given to fame and honour and virtue, what blood they had scrupled not to shed, that he might attain his ambition and she legalize her love! And now the harvest of it all had ripened, ripened in the days of a single month!

But as they took counsel together on Carberry

Hill in the gloaming of that June Sabbath day, Mary Stuart and Bothwell could hardly have realized that this was the end. It was an age of startling vicissitudes, of plots and counterplots, of rebellions successful to-day and ruined to-morrow; if they parted now, parted to save each other, they would soon meet again. In a few days their friends would rally to their side in greater numbers, and enable them to retrieve their ill-fortune. She would go over to the lords, and he must ride away to gather a new army and rescue her from their hands. But would she keep the oath of fidelity she had made to him? Yes, yes, she answered, and gave him her hand on the pledge.

Once more, then, a messenger was dispatched to summon Kirkcaldy of Grange to the Queen's presence. And when he came she told him that she had decided to give herself up to the lords if they would keep their promise and allow her followers to disperse. He rode quickly back to the rebel camp with the offer, and soon returned to say that Mary's terms of surrender were accepted.

And now the two must part. Tears were in Mary's eyes as she spoke a few words of adieu and allowed Bothwell to clasp her in a last embrace. And then, with one final backward glance and a plea that she would remember her promise, Bothwell vaulted to his horse and rode slowly away. Nor in the years to come would their paths ever meet again; they had taken an eternal farewell.

When Bothwell and his few attendants had passed out of sight, Mary turned to Kirkcaldy.

"Laird of Grange," she said, "I render myself unto you upon the conditions you rehearsed unto me in the name of the lords."

And Kirkcaldy, having kissed her outstretched hand, took her horse by the bridle and led it down the hill to the confederate camp.

Morton and several of the lords came forward to receive her.

"My lords," Mary said in answer to their obeisance, "I come to you, not out of any fear I had of my life, nor yet doubting of the victory if matters had gone to the worst; but I abhor the shedding of Christian blood, especially of those that are my own subjects, and therefore I yield to you, and will be ruled hereafter by your counsels, trusting you will respect me as your born Princess and Queen."

"Madam," returned Morton, "here is the place where Your Grace should be; and we will honour, serve, and obey you, as ever the nobility of this realm did any of your progenitors before."

But when she rode further into the camp, lowly obeisance and courtly phrases gave place to quite another welcome. The rough soldiers and craftsmen of Edinburgh flaunted their taffety banner in her face, and greeted her with an angry shout:

"Burn her! burn the whore!"

Flaming with indignation, Mary demanded to be allowed to return, or to ride off towards the friends who were coming to meet her. Nor was she pacified when Kirkcaldy struck at the shouting soldiers with the flat of his sword and ordered them to be silent.

They had promised her obedience ; let her send a messenger to her friends. And when the request was refused, and she was told that she must return with them to Edinburgh, she called Lord Lindsay to her side.

“ Give me your hand, my lord,” she demanded ; and when he obeyed, she continued : “ By the hand which is now in yours, I’ll have your head for this ! ”

By now the sun had sunk in the west, though the afterglow of the long northern twilight lingered in the sky. It was time, then, to return to the city ; for eight miles lay between Carberry Hill and Edinburgh.

Slowly the cavalcade proceeded on its way, the Queen in the midst, riding between the Earls Morton and Atholl. Utterly weary in body and soul, her face stained with dust and tears, her hair dishevelled and her strange costume disarranged, yet did she not abandon hope, but ever and anon peered to the right and left in expectation of sudden rescue.

None came. Her friends had not anticipated so swift an overthrow. And those among the rebels who had been part-partakers of her guilt were too deeply committed to a new righteousness to draw back now.

Soon, then, there emerged to view the dark silhouette of Edinburgh Castle, and by ten o’clock she was passing the charred ruins of Kirk o’ Field and drawing near to the Provost’s house close to the market-cross, where she was to be lodged for the night. News of that day’s doings had already reached the city, and the streets were crowded with

an excited mob. The windows, too, and the outside staircases were all occupied by turbulent citizens. And as the Queen was conveyed along there arose from the causeway and windows and stairheads passionate shouts of—

“Burn her, she’s not fit to live! Drown her! Kill the whore!”

Supper had been prepared in the Provost’s house in anticipation of the return of the lords, but when they invited Mary to partake of the meal with them she replied that they had already supplied her with supper enough. Besides, as was afterwards affirmed, had she not made a vow to eat no flesh till she saw Bothwell again? And she needed repose more than food. But when she was shut up in a little chamber she contrived to write a letter to Bothwell, addressing him as her “dear heart,” assuring him that she would never forget or abandon him, and reminding him that she had sent him away only for his safety. She wrote, too, to Kirkcaldy, bemoaning her state and charging him with having broken the promise of obedience he had made in the name of the lords. And then tired nature could endure no more; she flung herself undressed upon the bed and forgot her woes in sleep.

Now the window of her room looked out upon the street, and when she rose in the morning the first object to meet her gaze was the taffety banner with its picture of her murdered husband and her infant son beseeching: “Judge and revenge my cause, O Lord!” For once she gave way to utter despair. Forgetful that her hair was hanging about her ears,

that her tunic was unfastened and disclosed her breast, she sprang to the window and cried to the crowd for their pity. She had been betrayed by her own lords, she pleaded, and was held in prison against their promise. It was a pitiful exhibition for a woman and a Queen. "No man could look upon her," wrote a chronicler of the time, "but she moved him to pity and compassion."

Yet Maitland hardened his heart. He, her once trusted secretary, whom she had saved from many perils, and whom she had not seen since he slipped away from Holyrood without taking leave, passed beneath her chamber window that morning, but when she called him he drew his hat down over his eyes and walked on as though he heard not.

Mary's piteous aspect and appeals to the crowd seem to have effected a transformation in the popular sentiment. Some of the citizens began to commiserate her fate, and soon something like a riot arose beneath her window. It became necessary for the guard to interfere, and she was bidden remove herself from the public gaze.

Later in the day Maitland repented of his indifference and paid her a visit. It was a painful interview. Why, Mary demanded, had the lords separated her from her husband and then broken their promise to treat her as their Queen? For her own good, Maitland answered; such a separation was necessary for her honour and the peace of the kingdom. Besides, they had good reason to fear that if she were not kept in captivity she would thwart all their efforts to bring Bothwell to justice. Her own letter

to Bothwell of the previous night, which had been intercepted, proved that she would not abandon him.

And then Maitland took another line. Did she not know, he asked, that since the marriage Bothwell had been in constant correspondence with his former wife, and had actually told her that she was still his true wife and the Queen but his concubine?

He had been wiser to have kept silence on that. Of course Mary refused to believe it; nor was she convinced when Maitland promised to produce the letters in proof.

“Put us in a ship together,” she pleaded, “and let us go whither the seas may carry us.”

Maitland was not sure that that might not be the best solution of the difficulty, if their ship could be safeguarded against drifting to the shores of France. But he could not commit the lords to such a course, and in a few minutes he took his departure.

As the day wore away signs multiplied that compassion was beginning to take the place of rage in the hearts of the citizens of Edinburgh. Mary’s appeal that they would either take her life or deliver her from the lords, was passed from mouth to mouth, and some may have begun to reflect that while the lords had professed anxiety to relieve the Queen’s “most noble person” from “captivity and prison” their rescue had taken a strange form. And to placate such dangerous reasoning Mary’s captors thought it expedient to announce that ere the day ended she was to be allowed to return to Holyrood once more.

But none save the lords themselves knew that

they had that day resolved to immure the Queen in a "thralldom" and "captivity" of their own. It was all done in formal order, after the manner beloved by those bond-worshipping nobles. First they drew up a new statement of their case, giving another tedious history of the events of the past few months, dwelling with becoming horror on Darnley's murder and Bothwell's countless iniquities, explaining how, "although too late," they had risen in arms to rehabilitate their nation in the eyes of the world, and vowing their determination to defend the person of the "innocent Prince." And to this they put their hands, promising to support each other upon that "honour as noblemen" which they were unconscious had become somewhat tarnished.

And then another document had to be prepared, dignified with the title of "an Order in Council," which repeated the whole sordid story once more, and explained how necessary it was that the Queen's person should be "sequestered from all society of the said Earl Bothwell and from having any intelligence with him or others."

But where? In Holyrood? By no means.

"And finding," the order proceeded, "no place more meet nor commodious for Her Majesty to remain in than the house and place of Lochleven, ordains, commands, and charges Patrick Lord Lindsay, William Lord Ruthven, and William Douglas of Lochleven, to pass and convoy Her Majesty to the said place of Lochleven, and the said lord to receive her therein, and there they

and everyone of them to keep Her Majesty surely within the said place, and on no wise to suffer her to pass forth of the same, or to have intelligence from any manner of persons."

Thus all was ready for Mary's return to Holyrood. At nine o'clock that Monday evening, then, the earls Atholl and Morton, with a guard of nearly a hundred arquebusiers, duly escorted the Queen from the Provost's house to the palace of her ancestors.

But her return was that, not of a Queen, but a prisoner. 'Tis true a supper had been prepared, and that the Earl Morton stood behind Mary's chair as though in dutiful attendance; but midway through the meal the earl asked a servant whether the horses were ready, and, on receiving an affirmative reply, informed the Queen that she must prepare to ride.

Out in the courtyard of Holyrood there waited, already mounted, Lord Ruthven and the Lord Lindsay, whom she had threatened with beheading a night ago. There were other horsemen, too, sufficient in number and arms to provide against a rescue. These were to be her companions for another dreary night-ride. Mary knew not whither she was bound or the fate in store. Perhaps she little cared. All her appeals for a change of dress or for the companionship of her trusted maids were ignored. No friendly face smiled upon her; no voice bade her be of good cheer. With the alternating memories of those last few days surging through her brain she had little thought for the present hour or care what the future would bring.

And so with jingling bridles and clattering hoofs

she and her guard rode on through the night air. Soon they reached the Firth of Forth, and dismounted on that shore where she had landed a returning Sovereign nigh six years ago ; then a boat-journey across the wide, dark waters, and to horse again when the farther shore was reached. She could guess now whither she was bound, even though she had not read that warrant which consigned her to be kept "surely" within the walls of Lochleven Castle.

CHAPTER V

THE PRISON

MARY STUART's prison was cunningly chosen. The lords cared little, it is to be feared, about the "commodiousness" of her jail; the security of the place and the trustworthiness of her keepers were more essential matters than personal comfort. Her captors were in a critical position. Notwithstanding the success which had attended their rebellion, they were keenly alive to the fact that up to the present they were a minority of the nobles, and that if the friends of the Queen were able to effect her rescue she might even yet rally so large a party to her side that they would be in imminent danger of impeachment and execution as traitors to the Crown. Above all things, then, it was necessary that Her Majesty should be kept "surely" and prevented from having any communication with Bothwell and her friends.

Hence the choice of Lochleven Castle. The fortress was an ideal prison, and its tenants could be relied upon for fidelity to their trust. Built upon a small island in the lake and about half a mile distant from the west shore, Lochleven Castle had for many generations been regarded as one

of the chief strongholds of Scotland. Owing to the drainage of the lake in the first half of the nineteenth century the castle island has now an area of some five acres, but in 1567 its surface did not comprise more than half that space, and hence the castle and its surrounding wall and buildings were then more protected by the encompassing water. Although erected in the fourteenth century, the principal building—the keep—is still so sturdy a structure that it will doubtless bid defiance to time for many generations. Its walls average some eight feet in thickness, and the only entrance to the interior was by a door in the second story more than twenty feet above the ground-level. The three corners of the tower immediately overlooking the lake were equipped with bartizan turrets, and thus gave effective command over the watery approach to the castle.

Although the courtyard wall is now considerably ruined, sufficient remains to show that there was but one entrance to that courtyard—namely, by a gate close to the keep, and that that solitary entrance was flanked by ominous-looking portholes. Even the round tower in the south-east corner of the courtyard, which, according to tradition, was the prison of Mary Stuart, could be entered only from within the castle precincts. At the period of the Queen's imprisonment the accessory buildings included several structures in the courtyard; but these have wholly disappeared, leaving the massive keep, the crumbling wall, and Queen Mary's Tower as the sole aids to the imagination in repicturing

the aspect of the castle on that June morning of 1567, when the Scottish Sovereign entered it as a prisoner.

But the natural strength of Lochleven Castle and its isolation on an island in a lake were not the only points in its favour; its custodians for the time being were Sir William Douglas and his mother, the Dowager Lady Douglas. Now of these two it should be remembered that the latter was none other than that Lady Margaret Erskine, daughter of the Earl of Mar, who, as one of the numerous mistresses of James V., was the mother of the Earl of Moray, the half-brother of Mary Stuart. Her lapse from virtue did not prevent her from finding a husband in the person of Sir Robert Douglas of Lochleven, to whom she bore several sons. By 1567, however, she had been long a widow, and her eldest-born son had succeeded to his father's title and estates. That son, then, was half-brother to the Earl of Moray, was nephew to the Earl of Mar, and so near kin to the Earl Morton that he was second prospective heir of that noble. It should be added, too, that Sir William Douglas's sympathies were wholly with the reformed party in religion, that he had taken part in the murder of Rizzio, and that he had been one of the first to join the lords in their rebellion against the Queen. Such were Mary Stuart's jailers at Lochleven Castle: a woman who had been her father's mistress and the mother of a son who but for the bar sinister would have worn her crown; and a man who hated her religion and was nearly allied in blood to the chief of her

rebel lords. They might be relied upon to "keep Her Majesty surely."

Nevertheless the confederates were ill at ease. It was true many things were in their favour: the infant Prince was in their hands; the Queen was a prisoner; Edinburgh was at their devotion, including its formidable castle; and every movement they had made thus far had been crowned with success. But there were many weighty items on the other side of the balance-sheet: Bothwell was at large, a desperate and dangerous man; the powerful family of the Hamiltons, and such influential nobles as Argyle, Huntly, Herries, and Boyd, were in deadly opposition; some of the chief fortresses, such as Dunbar and Dumbarton, were being held for the Queen; and there were grave doubts as to the attitude which Elizabeth of England would take. "You have done ill to declare yourself so soon and so openly in the lords' affairs," was the warning one cautious Scot addressed to an adherent of the rebels, and there were probably not a few among the confederates who were gravely perturbed as to what turn events would take in the ensuing days. Maitland was especially anxious. He wrote an earnest letter to Queen Elizabeth's chief minister. "I pray by your means," he told Cecil, "we may find the Queen's Majesty's favourable allowance of our proceedings." He also pleaded that the English Sovereign would aid them with a small sum of money to levy arquebusiers and "make a short and sudden end" of the whole business. He was evidently perplexed as to the next step to be taken.

An accident supplied the answer. On Thursday, the 19th of June, as the Earl Morton was seated at dinner, one of his servants hurriedly entered the room and whispered in his ear that three of Bothwell's servants, including George Dalgleish, had just been seen to enter Edinburgh and make their way to the castle. He acted at once on the information. Calling two of his cousins, Archibald and Robert Douglas, to his side, he commanded them to take a party of his servants and go in search of Bothwell's retainers. Hastening forth they sped quickly to the castle, only to find that the men had disappeared. Separating for a further quest, Robert Douglas at length met a man who, "for a mean piece of money," offered to reveal where Dalgleish lay hid. The bribe was soon forthcoming, and, acting on the information it purchased, Douglas made his way to the house indicated. It was no false clue; there was Dalgleish sure enough, and he was found to have in his possession numerous parchments relating to Bothwell's estates and titles. Dalgleish was at once taken to Morton, and when that earl asked him why he had been sent to the castle and what letters he had fetched from thence, he replied that his master had merely required him to secure his clothing, and that the only papers he had taken were the documents already found upon his person. Morton did not believe him. His looks and behaviour suggested that he had not revealed either the full terms of Bothwell's orders or the extent of his booty from the castle.

For that night, then, Dalgleish was committed to prison, and the following morning he was taken to the torture-chamber of the Tolbooth. But the ominous-looking chair in that apartment unloosened his tongue. Pleading that his captor of the previous afternoon might be sent to him, he expressed his willingness to disclose to Douglas what else he had taken from the castle. In a few minutes they set off for the house in which Dalgleish had been captured, and there, from under the foot of a bed, he produced a small silver casket which Bothwell had specially commissioned him to secure and bring to him.

That casket was at once taken to Morton and he summoned the other nobles to examine it with him. It was securely locked, and as no key was available, the lid was forced open. And when the contents were taken out it was discovered that they consisted of numerous letters, a contract of marriage, and a long poem. The letters and poem were in the familiar handwriting of Mary Stuart; the contract in that of the Earl of Huntly. But it was not until the documents were read that the lords realized the importance of their discovery and understood why Bothwell had been so anxious to regain them into his custody. For the marriage contract was that which Mary and Bothwell had signed at Seton on the 5th of April last; the letters were those the Queen had written to her lover with reference to Darnley's murder and her own capture; and the poetry was that sequence of sonnets which she had composed just prior to Bothwell's carrying her to Dunbar. Bothwell had carefully preserved them

all. And this silver casket, with the crown and monogram of Francis II., the gift of Mary to her third husband, had provided a convenient receptacle. He had left it behind him in Edinburgh Castle, but, in the new turn events had taken, was now naturally anxious to secure possession of it once more. Hence the errand of Dalgleish; hence that servant's reluctance to confess the full details of his instructions.

Bothwell's loss was the lords' gain. The discovery of the casket letters lifted a heavy weight of anxiety from their minds. They were more justified than they knew. Here were documents which proved beyond question not only that Mary was a consenting party to her own abduction, and had planned the seizure with her abductor, that her sexual relations with Bothwell antedated her husband's death, that Bothwell had been the chief actor in Darnley's murder, but that she, the anointed Queen of Scotland, had participated to a criminal extent in the assassination of her husband.

If, however, the revelations of the casket letters extenuated the rebellion of the confederates they also added to their difficulties. Or, at least, to the difficulties of those who were adverse to taking extreme action. For the lords' party represented two elements in the commonwealth. Some were in favour of pushing their advantage to the utmost, without regard to the fate of the Queen; others were anxious to hit upon such a solution of the state of affairs as would save the country from the horrors of civil war. Now the extremists among the rebels appealed to the casket letters as justifying

their policy, making the task of the moderates increasably arduous. It is not difficult to surmise what effect the letters would have had on the populace which was already inflamed against the Queen; happily, however, their discovery and their contents were, for a long time, a secret shared only by those who took part in the private deliberations of the leaders. The casket letters, it was finally resolved, were to be held in reserve until such time as their publication became absolutely necessary to justify the proceedings of the rebel lords.

But so far as Bothwell was concerned there was no division of opinion. And one result of the discovery of the casket letters was that five days later a proclamation for his arrest was issued by the authority of the "lords of secret council and others of the nobility, barons, and faithful subjects" of the realm. It repeated the now familiar story of preceding proclamations, but was more confident in its accusations. It charged the fugitive earl with being the "principal author" of Darnley's murder, and added that it had now been found that he was not only the inventor and deviser of that crime, but also "the executor with his own hands." For that reason, then, all the lieges of the realm were commanded not to assist Bothwell in any way or receive him into their houses. And it was further promised that whoever should capture the said earl and bring him to Edinburgh would be rewarded with a thousand crowns.

Had the lords been more assured of their own position and been able to command the services of

more numerous men-at-arms, it is probable that they would not have contented themselves with waging a mere paper-warfare with Bothwell. He was still at Dunbar Castle; it would have shown a more courageous spirit to besiege him there instead of gibbeting him in proclamations and calling upon the lieges to effect his arrest. But, apart from the insecurity of their own position and their deficiency in armed men, it is also likely that the lords were not really in earnest for Bothwell's capture just yet. When they grew stronger, yes; but in the meantime he might prove a highly inconvenient prisoner. He knew too many secrets implicating some of their own number for his presence in Edinburgh to be desirable at that juncture.

For the present, then, Bothwell was allowed to go his own way. If he had remained at Dunbar he would not have been in any imminent danger, and his departure from that castle on the day following the proclamation for his arrest was not prompted by that document. He had decided to visit the Earl of Huntly in the north, and take counsel with him in raising a force for the rescue of the Queen. But his welcome at Strathbogie does not appear to have been particularly hearty; Huntly was growing weary of his alliance with Darnley's murderer, and Bothwell soon realized that he would have to rely upon his own influence. Indeed, if a letter-writer of the time was correctly informed, he became suspicious that his former brother-in-law contemplated handing him over to the lords. At any rate, he deemed it advisable to steal away from Huntly's castle in the night

and seek refuge with his grand-uncle, the Bishop of Moray, in his castle at Spynie.

From that secure retreat, where he could rely upon the friendship of the relative who had been his tutor and guardian in his boyhood years, he sent out numerous messages to his friends. They were urgent appeals for help in effecting "Her Majesty's relief out of strait prison and captivity." He did not wholly ignore the charges which had been made against himself; but it was a mere passing allusion to the innocence which "time would try"; the more urgent business was the rescue of the Queen, a "sore and heavy" matter to him, for which he exhorted and prayed the assistance of his friends. Let them be in readiness, he implored, to come to his aid when he should inform them the day and place. These entreating appeals for help in procuring Mary's deliverance from "strait prison and captivity" were dated from Spynie Castle on the 16th of July.

Bothwell little knew how perilous the Queen's position was. On the very day when he was signing his supplications to his friends a letter was being written in Edinburgh containing this ominous sentence: "The Queen is in great fear of her life." Her alarm, indeed, was so great that to the lords who were acting as her jailers she had declared she would be well content to be allowed to spend the remainder of her days in a "close nunnery." News had reached her of the angry temper of the people of Edinburgh. Three times within the space of seventeen days she had been visited by Robert Melville, who at his first and second interviews faithfully warned her of the

danger which threatened if she did not consent to abandon Bothwell and agree to a divorce. But to those proposals she would not listen for a moment. And when Melville came back a third time with a still more ominous report of the attitude of the lords, and urged her once more to consent to a divorce, she persisted in her refusal. Nay, she in turn became a suppliant, and begged Melville to convey a letter to Bothwell, which, when he refused to accept, she angrily thrust into the fire.

Not by any persuasion, then, could Mary be induced to renounce Bothwell.

"I will live and die with him," she affirmed, "and if it is put to my choice to relinquish crown and kingdom, or the Lord Bothwell, I will leave my kingdom and dignity to live as a simple damsel with him. I will never consent that he shall fare worse or have more harm than myself."

But Melville's visits and solemn warnings aroused her to a consciousness of her danger. If only she could regain her freedom! And one day the opportunity seemed to offer. As she walked round the island outside the castle walls she came upon a little boat, into which, as no one was near, she stepped, and immediately began to row for the shore. Ere she had gone very far, however, she was overtaken by another boat manned by a party of guards, who asked her whither she was going. Merely, she answered with ready wit, to see whether the watchers were on the alert. Of course, her enterprise was at an end, and she had to return to the castle. Nor had she observed, apparently,

that the boat she had seized had several holes in it, and would probably have sunk before she reached the shore.

In Edinburgh, meanwhile, the revengeful mood of the people was intensified by the gossip that the Queen refused to abandon Bothwell. The women were furious against her, though the men were "mad enough." Many of those men had been at Carberry Hill, and they clamoured for her deposition or her destruction. Soon, too, oil would be added to the flames. An assembly of the reformed Church had been called, at which John Knox would be present, and such a gathering would add immense difficulties to the task of those who wished to spare Mary's life and avoid the bloodshed of a civil war. There was far greater need, then, than Bothwell knew for the succour of the Queen.

And at that juncture a deliverer appeared. When the news of Carberry Hill, and the imprisonment in Lochleven Castle, reached Queen Elizabeth, she at once wrote to her cousin of Scotland.

"For your comfort in your present adversity," she said, "we are determined to do all in our power for your honour and safety, and to send with all speed one of our trusty servants, not only to understand your state, but so to deal with your nobility and people as they shall find you not to lack our friendship and power."

Elizabeth kept her word. The "trusty servant" whom she selected as her own special representative for this crucial mission was Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, a choice which must have been welcome to

Mary, for he had been Elizabeth's Ambassador at the Court of France when she was Queen of that land, and had proved himself her true friend and admirer, notwithstanding their difference in religion.

Before leaving London Throckmorton had several long interviews with Elizabeth and Cecil, and the latter handed him a paper of carefully drafted instructions. The chief points of that document were these: To Mary herself he was to express Elizabeth's grief at the events of the past few months, and her astonishment that she should have been so lax in pursuing the murderers of Darnley, and then to be for husband so "defamed" a man as Bothwell. Those actions had almost resolved the English Queen to have no more to do with her, but her imprisonment by her nobles had altered her mind. She had determined, then, to use all possible means to aid her in recovering her liberty. To the lords, on the other hand, Throckmorton was to declare the command of Elizabeth that he be given access to their Queen, assuring them at the same time that the objects she had in view were the good of the realm, the prosecution of Darnley's murderers, and the safety of the infant Prince. He was also to remind the lords that they had no right to imprison their Queen or deprive her of her princely state. And, finally, he was to demand Mary's liberty on the understanding that she was to be divorced from Bothwell, and assist in executing justice on him and his accomplices.

Throckmorton soon realized that he had undertaken a "busy and dangerous legation." Arriving

in Edinburgh late on Saturday, the 12th of July, he was naturally anxious for an immediate interview with the lords, but on Sunday they were too much engaged with a "solemn fast and communion." Maitland, however, who was more worldly-minded than the rest, came to his lodgings, and talked over the situation. The result was not encouraging. Many of the lords were absent, Maitland said, and nothing definite could be done until they returned ; they were somewhat suspicious of Elizabeth's attitude seeing that she had ignored their letters for practical assistance ; while as for his being allowed access to the Queen, one difficulty was that they had refused a similar request from the French Ambassador.

Nor was Throckmorton more reassured by such information as he could gather by strolling through the streets of Edinburgh, and holding informal chats with the citizens. He it was who wrote that significant sentence about Mary being "in great fear of her life." To Cecil he confided his belief that the lords were "on the way to make an end of their matters with their Sovereign," even though they were perplexed "how to be rid of her." John Knox had arrived, and he had interviewed him and the dauntless John Craig—they were both "very austere" against the Queen. She was evidently in "very great peril of her life," for it was the public speech of all save a few that she had "no more privilege to commit murder and adultery than any private person."

All Throckmorton's attempts to secure an inter-

view with Mary ended in failure. She herself had asked that he be allowed to visit her, and the Ambassador insisted again and again on the commands which had been laid upon him by the Queen of England ; but the lords still refused their permission. He did succeed, however, in sending a message to the prisoner of Lochleven—a message in which he informed her that he had been sent for her relief, and in which he also implored her to renounce Bothwell and agree to a divorce.

To the latter part of that message Mary Stuart returned an inflexible reply.

“She sent me word,” Throckmorton wrote to Elizabeth on July 18th, “that she will nowise consent to it, but rather die, giving this reason, that taking herself to be seven weeks gone with child, by renouncing Bothwell she would acknowledge herself to be with child of a bastard.”

Now this was not the earliest reference to Mary’s pregnancy. Writing in London on May 24th—that is, nine days after the marriage with Bothwell—de Silva reported to the Spanish King : “It is said here that the cause of the Queen of Scotland’s hurry over this marriage is that she is pregnant, and the matter was arranged between them some time ago.” Again, on June 15th, one month after the marriage, the Earl of Bedford remarked in a letter to a friend “that the infant Prince of Scotland was in greater danger than before by reason their Queen is with child.” Six days later de Silva again reverted to the subject : “The Queen is pregnant,” he wrote, “and they say five months gone.” To these rumours

the testimony of Mary herself must be added ; on the 17th of July she estimated that she was seven weeks gone with child.

Doubtless Mary was not absolutely truthful in fixing the period of her gestation. Seven weeks would be a feasable term for a marriage now a little over two months old. The exact date when she conceived Bothwell's child was a secret she carried to her grave. But that it was several months prior to her marriage is highly probable. What is certain, for one thing, is that her marital relations with Darnley had ceased a considerable time before his murder, certainly by December, 1566. That, it will be remembered, was the month of her infant's baptism at Stirling, where Bothwell ruled everything. It was on one of the closing days of that month, too, that Darnley hurriedly left Stirling without taking leave of his wife. And when the two met again nearly a month later it was one of the pleas of Darnley that he and she might be "together at bed and board as husband and wife." It was when fresh from that interview with her sick husband that Mary wrote to Bothwell of her restlessness because she could not sleep in "your dear arms, my love."

Many forbidding stories were to be afterwards told of how she had "abused her body" with Bothwell in the month of September, and how she had caused a secret passage to be made in Stirling Castle connecting her chamber with Bothwell's ; but, whatever the truth of those stories, the probabilities are that when she went to fetch Darnley to

Kirk o' Field she already bore in her womb the pledge of her illicit love.

That explained all. It explained her pretence of affection to Darnley on the last night she saw him, for if he lived it would be convenient to have him as the cause of the paternity of the child ; it explained the mingled jealousy and passion of her letters from Glasgow ; it explained her concurrence in the plans for Darnley's removal ; it explained her indifference to Lennox's appeals that she would imprison Bothwell ; it explained the marriage contract at Seton ; it explained the collusive nature of Bothwell's trial ; it explained her abduction ; it explained her indifference to the warnings of her faithful friends ; it explained the indecent hurry of Bothwell's divorce and the hiding of the dispensation ; it explained why she hastened to become a wife within three months of her being a widow. For the fear that she, the anointed Queen of Scotland, might give birth to a child for whom there was no legal father, was a dread potent enough to drive her to the most desperate measures. It was the prospect of that shame, the shame of bringing forth a bastard, which steeled her to cling to Bothwell even when death threatened to be the price of her resolve.

How imminent Mary's peril was Throckmorton clearly expounded in a long letter which he wrote to Elizabeth on the 19th of July. Great numbers, he said, were resorting to Edinburgh for the approaching assembly of the reformed Church, and on all hands he heard it stoutly affirmed that "it shall not lie in the power of any *within* this realm,

neither *without*, to keep the Queen from condign punishment for her notorious crimes."

Summing up the situation as a whole, Throckmorton reported that four different courses had been discussed by the lords in their secret councils. The first was in favour of the restoration of the Queen to liberty and her regal state on condition of pardon for the rebels, punishment of Darnley's murderers, and a divorce from Bothwell. The second stipulated for Mary's abdication, her removal to England or France, the appointment of a Council to govern the realm, and an undertaking that she would never return to Scotland. The third course advocated the crowning of the infant Prince and Mary's life-long imprisonment. The fourth suggested her public trial and condemnation with deprivation of estate and life.

As most of the lords were inclined to favour either the third or fourth plan, Throckmorton took a high ground in arguing with them. He reminded them that as their law officers and courts of justice derived their authority from the Queen, they had no competent judges or tribunal for the trial they proposed. But the lords retorted that new offences did in all states occasion new laws and new punishments. And in that they had the powerful support of John Knox, who, from his pulpit in St. Giles's, in preaching from the Book of Kings, "inveighed vehemently against the Queen, and persuaded extremities toward her by application of his text." Throckmorton implored the lords to advise the preachers not to prejudice a matter still undecided,

but they paid no heed, and Knox was allowed to continue his fulminations and threatenings that the “great plague of God” would fall on the country unless condign punishment were meted out to the Queen.

Throckmorton was in despair. He knew Mary was dead in estate and expected any hour to hear she was dead in body too. On Sunday, the 20th of July, he sought another interview with the lords, but Morton—he who was notorious for an immoral life—reminded him that the day had been set apart for “continual preaching and common prayer” and that he could not attend to “matters of the world !”

Late that Sabbath night, however, the unworldly Maitland called at Throckmorton’s lodgings. After a little preliminary conversation the English Ambassador once more urged his request that he be allowed to visit Mary in her prison. And once again Maitland replied that for a decision in that matter he would have to wait until the absent lords returned to Edinburgh.

Throckmorton could not conceal his resentment at that evasive answer. But Maitland, instead of growing angry too, waxed confidential.

“Sir,” he said, “I will talk frankly with you. You see our humours here and how we be bent. Do you not see that it doth not lie in my power to save the Queen my mistress in estate, in person, and in honour? I know well enough it is not hidden from you what extremity the chief of our assembly be in concerning the ending of this matter. You heard yesterday and somewhat this day how both you and

I were publicly taxed in the preachings, though we were not named. To my great grief I speak it, the Queen my Sovereign may not be abiden amongst us, and this is not time to do her good, if she be ordained to have any."

During the interview Maitland handed Throckmorton a paper. It was a formal answer of the lords to his various demands, or, rather, an apology for their rebellion. After repeating Maitland's excuse as to an interview with the Queen, the memorandum set forth once more the catalogue of Bothwell's and Mary's offences, and argued that those offences were ample justification for their appeal to arms. As to the Queen's imprisonment, that was rendered necessary by her own action. When they brought her to Edinburgh they pressed her to separate herself from that "wicked man," but, contrary to their expectations, she stoutly refused, declared that she would rather give up her realm than abandon him, and threatened revenge on all who attempted to separate her from her husband. Wherefore, the lords concluded, they had no option save to "sequestrate her person for a season."

Two days later the lords made their final decision. The nobles for whom they had been waiting, the Earls Mar and Glencairn and several barons, arrived in Edinburgh on the 23rd of July, and a secret conference of all the rebel leaders was at once held. Throckmorton was not admitted to that council, but the following day he gained an inkling of the trend of the discussion. It had been resolved, he learned, that in the event of the Queen not agreeing

to the suggestions of the lords, they would proceed to charge her with tyranny, incontinency, and murder. Of the latter crime, they said, they had apparent proof "by the testimony of her own hand-writing" which they had recovered.

Throckmorton realized that he must, and swiftly, make a last effort. On the morning of the 24th, then, he requested a conference with the lords. But several hours passed ere he received an answer. It was not, indeed, until four o'clock in the afternoon that Maitland and two of the lords waited upon him and requested him to accompany them to the Tolbooth. On reaching that building he was conducted to the apartment in which the lords and gentlemen were waiting, all of whom, to the number of forty, rose from their seats around a long table to do honour to the Ambassador of Queen Elizabeth. Throckmorton acknowledged their salute in a courtly manner, greeting specially those he had not met before. When all had resumed their seats, Morton requested the English Ambassador to declare his royal mistress's wishes. He did so, laying special emphasis upon the fact that Elizabeth had instructed him to reprove her cousin for the faults of her marriage. He added, however, that it was the desire of his mistress that the Scottish Queen should be restored to her freedom, and that he should be allowed access to her in person.

When he had finished, Maitland, after a whispered consultation with Morton, explained that, as many of the lords had been ignorant up to that moment of the views of the English Queen, perhaps her Ambassador would have patience with them while

they discussed his message. Throckmorton accordingly returned to his lodgings and waited.

It was past ten o'clock that night before Maitland called to hand him the written decision of the lords. In many words and roundabout phraseology it was a polite refusal to restore Mary to liberty or allow her to receive a visit from Elizabeth's Ambassador. If Throckmorton, the document said, were to charge her with her faults, that would be "grievous" to her, and if he proceeded to tell her that he had been sent to procure her liberty, she might take such "comfort" from his words as would disincline her to listen to the suggestions of her own lords. They did not wish their Queen to "lack comfort," but the state of the realm required them to be careful "how, after what sort, and by whom, she be comforted." They were themselves about to give Her Majesty good advice; indeed, "some are already in hand with it."

At that late hour of the 24th of July when Throckmorton read those words, the "some" who were "already in hand" with Mary Stuart's "comfort" had made an end of their consolatory mission.

For early in the morning of the same day two messengers had been dispatched to Lochleven Castle. One was Robert Melville, who had already made several visits to the imprisoned Queen to persuade her to abandon Bothwell; the other was Lord Lindsay, one of the fiercest of the nobles, and he whom Mary had threatened with beheading on her entering the rebel camp at Carberry Hill.

Melville carried several messages to the unhappy

Queen. The Earls of Atholl and Mar, and Maitland and Kirkcaldy, had bidden him assure their Sovereign that anything she was compelled to do under threat of violence and while in prison could not be cited to her prejudice when she regained her liberty; and in the scabbard of his sword Melville concealed a brief note from Throckmorton, assuring Mary that "no resignation made in the time of her captivity would be of force, but was null in law because done out of a just fear." Maitland's message took a more symbolical form: it consisted of a gold ornament with a tiny enamelled picture of *Æsop's* fable of the lion and the mouse.

On reaching Lochleven, Melville at once sought an interview with the Queen to acquaint her with the object of the visit. He told her that the Lord Lindsay was the bearer of three documents to which she was required to affix her signature. One declared that owing to her weakness in health and the difficulties of governing so turbulent a realm she had resolved to relinquish her crown in favour of her infant son; another gave authority for his coronation; and the third appointed the Earl of Moray to be Regent of the kingdom during the Prince's minority. Such, in brief, was the purport of the papers which the Lord Lindsay would require her to sign.

Forgetting for the moment that after all the lords had merely taken her at her word, and that she had declared she would rather renounce her kingdom than abandon Bothwell, Mary passionately declared that she would never sign the papers. And then

Melville reminded her how desperate her position was ; he assured her that the lords were firmly determined on the course they would pursue ; warned her in solemn tones that if she refused no earthly power could save her life ; and finally acquainted her with the friendly messages of which he was the bearer. And when, in addition to these arguments and assurances, Mary learnt that the Lord Lindsay was close at hand and in a "very boasting" humour, she told Melville she would act upon his advice.

So Lindsay was summoned into the apartment and laid his three documents on the table. He did not offer to read them, and Mary was too highly wrought to supply the omission for herself. She knew too well what they contained, and, with many tears, she signed her name to each of the papers. But the old defiant spirit was not quite extinguished.

"Whosoever God shall put me to liberty," she cried, as she pushed the papers away from her, "I will not abide by this action, for it is done against my will."

That scene in Lochleven Castle was to have a ludicrous sequel four days later. It appears that on the day of the visit of Melville and Lindsay the master of the castle, Sir William Douglas, was absent, and that, when he learnt what had transpired in the interval, he pretended great concern lest he should be held responsible for the doings of the lords' messengers. To save his own skin, then, or perhaps to support the lords in their claim that Mary had renounced her crown of her own

free will, he planned the acting of a little farce. Summoning a notary from the town at the edge of the lake, and calling three witnesses, one of the latter being his own brother George, Sir William Douglas went to Mary's chamber and stated that it had come to his hearing that Her Majesty had subscribed a demission of her crown without his knowledge. He would be glad, therefore, if the Queen would say whether the act had been done of her own free will and consent. Mary, weary of the whole business, shortly rejoined that as Sir William Douglas was absent he could not know anything of her proceedings, and certainly had not himself used any compulsion by word or deed. Then would she, Douglas continued, be willing to go to Stirling and make that declaration ? He himself would convey her thither. And now Mary contributed her touch to the comedy. She was not prepared for the present, she said, to go to Stirling, but preferred that Sir William would allow her to remain in his castle at ease and quietness. Then, Douglas concluded, Her Majesty should not for the future be held as "captive or in prison with him !" All of which was solemnly written down by the notary and sedately subscribed by the three witnesses.

But to return to Edinburgh. On the night when Maitland called to hand him the answer of the lords, Throckmorton received an urgent letter from Queen Elizabeth. His reports of the doings of the lords had made her angry. She would not refuse them her assistance in bringing Darnley's murderers to

justice and preserving the infant Prince; but she could in no respect allow the imprisonment of the Queen, and until they restored her to liberty and her royal state she would not listen to their requests. Throckmorton, too, was to charge the lords to "forbear any hasty proceedings" pending the return of the Earl of Moray.

Once more, then, it devolved upon the anxious Ambassador to demand an interview with the lords. But they were too busy to see him; the Lord Lindsay and Robert Melville had that morning returned from Lochleven, and they were engaged with them in secret council. An hour before noon, however, the busy Maitland came to Throckmorton's lodgings, and the Ambassador at once imparted to him the purport of his latest letter from Queen Elizabeth.

Throckmorton spoke gravely. He enlarged upon the importance of Mary being restored immediately to liberty, asserted that the Queen of England would regard any rigorous proceedings against their Sovereign as a "very temerarious act," and declared Elizabeth's wish that they should suspend all action until Moray returned.

Maitland replied not less gravely. He would report Throckmorton's message to the lords. Meantime he spoke for himself.

"Sir," he said, "I say unto you as one that would of all ills choose the least, if you press the lords to enlarge the Queen my Sovereign, or use any threatening speech in that matter, I assure you you will put the Queen my Sovereign in great jeopardy of her life."

No further messenger came to Throckmorton that day; but at noon on the morrow, the 26th of July, the chief of the lords waited upon him in a body. They were booted and spurred for a long ride and had little time to spare. Briefly Throckmorton repeated to them the essential points of Elizabeth's letter, to which the lords replied that they willingly agreed to suspend further proceedings with their Sovereign until Moray returned; adding, however, that as their Queen had voluntarily resigned her throne in favour of her son, they were on their way to Stirling for the coronation of the Prince, at which they invited the English Ambassador to be present.

Throckmorton could not refrain a scornful rejoinder. Their speech was somewhat contradictory. They would wait until Moray returned, and yet they had deprived their Queen of her estate and were about to crown her son!

"As to my going to Stirling with you, my lords," Throckmorton continued, "I cannot assist at any such doings. While Her Majesty, my mistress, wishes the Prince as much honour and safety as any of you, yet she cannot allow the son to depose his mother from her estate."

No prince, rejoined one of the lords, however aged or wise, ruled without a Council; and their Sovereign had provided that the fittest of the nobility should have rule during her son's minority.

And another interjected:

"The realm could never be worse governed than it was, for either the Queen was advised by the worst counsel, or by no counsel."

An approving shout showed that the speaker had uttered the minds of all. There was no more to be said. And ere Throckmorton could renew his protests the nobles moved towards the door.

"My lord," they ended, "we will trouble you no longer. The day passeth away and we have far to ride."

What was to be Throckmorton's next step? He was utterly weary of his "busy and dangerous legation." He felt he could do no more. "I pray you," he wrote to Cecil, "procure with speed my revocation." Mary's life had been spared up to the present, but he feared the final tragedy might not be long delayed. The danger, indeed, was by no means past. There were yet many who clamoured for extreme measures. But Throckmorton's firm attitude and severe warnings had postponed a final decision until Moray's return.

Now the Earl of Moray had been more than four months absent from Scotland. He left Edinburgh early in April, making his way to London and thence to France. Doubtless he foresaw the troubrous times ahead and judged it best to be out of the country. He, then, had no responsibility for the inaction in the pursuit of Darnley's murderers, no part in Bothwell's collusive trial, and was free of all implication in the Queen's hasty marriage, the rebellion of the lords, and the imprisonment at Lochleven.

But his various friends kept him fully informed of what was happening in Edinburgh, and as early as the 8th of May Kirkcaldy advised him to be ready to return when he should be sent for. Then on

July 8th a message was dispatched bidding him "haste" homewards. Fifteen days later he arrived in London, and tarried there until the end of the month. He had long interviews with Elizabeth, and later opened his mind freely to the Spanish Ambassador, de Silva. To him he expressed great sorrow at the action of the lords, and declared his intention of doing his best to preserve the Queen's estate and procure her a measure of liberty. But when de Silva went on to say that Mary's confessor did not believe she was implicated in Darnley's murder, Moray shook his head. It was certain, he said, that the Queen had been cognizant of that crime, for a letter in her own writing had been discovered which placed that matter beyond doubt. On the whole, he could not foresee how the matter would end ; as the Queen was his sister he would do the best for her.

Pending the arrival of Moray in Edinburgh, Throckmorton's letters to Elizabeth were occupied with more trivial matters than had filled his epistles for some days. The Scottish Queen had been ill of ague, he reported one day, and, later, that she still kept her bed. But, notwithstanding that illness, she was as "straitly guarded as ever"; nay, on her showing signs of recovery she had been "shut up in a tower" and none admitted to speak with her. The reason for that stricter confinement showed that she had not lost her power to fascinate. "By one means or other she has won the favour and goodwill of most part of the house, as well men as women, whereby she had means of great intelli-

gence, and was in some towardness (it was feared) to have escaped."

Other rumours of the prisoner gave an even more cheerful picture of her state. "The Queen of Scots is calmed and better quieted than of late, and takes both rest and meat, and also some pastime, as dancing and play at cards." But she had her hours of depression too. From her window she saw a boy playing happily on the shore of the island, and to him she gave messages for her friends.

"Bid them," she said, "pray to God for my soul, for the body is worth nothing now."

Had Mary Stuart been able to read what Throckmorton was writing from Edinburgh those days she could not have framed a more fitting prayer. For suddenly the letters of the English Ambassador reverted to the old solemn news. Writing to Elizabeth on the 9th of August he had to report that the danger of death was by no means passed. He had had two visitors recently—the Laird of Tullibardine and Maitland. The former gave him strange news of the Hamiltons and the Earls of Argyle and Huntly. Throckmorton had relied upon them as Mary's unfailing friends, and they had assured him that they would venture all to procure their Queen's liberation. But Tullibardine had another story to tell—the Hamiltons, at any rate, were as eager for Mary's death as John Knox himself.

"For she being taken away," he explained, "they account but the little King between them and the throne, and he may die."

“ My lord,” replied the astonished Throckmorton, “ you are a gentleman of honour, and worthy of credit, but you must give me leave to doubt what you say, because I have some reason to think otherwise of those lords.”

“ My lord Ambassador,” Tullibardine rejoined, “ I have no great acquaintance with you, but never take me for a true gentleman if this be not true that I tell you.”

Later in the afternoon Maitland called, and to him Throckmorton expressed once more Elizabeth’s indignation at the proceedings of the lords, indulging in many threatening hints of the vengeance intended by the Queen of England.

“ My lord Ambassador,” Maitland gravely remarked, “ I have heard what you have said. I assure you if you should use those words unto the lords all the world could not save the Queen’s life three days ; and, as the case now stands, it will be much ado to save her life.”

And then Maitland confirmed Tullibardine’s news of the treachery of the Hamiltons and the rest.

“ I say unto you, as I am a Christian man, if we who have dealt in this action would consent to take the Queen’s life, all the lords who hold aloof from us would come and join with us within two days.”

Throckmorton began to argue against such an extreme course, but Maitland interrupted him.

“ How,” he asked, “ can you satisfy men that the Queen will not become a dangerous party against them if she live and be restored to liberty ?”

"Divorce her from Bothwell," Throckmorton answered.

"We cannot bring it to pass," Maitland said; "she will in no wise hear of the matter."

In truth it was high time the Earl of Moray returned. And on the 11th of August he arrived, attended by the numerous lords who had ridden to meet him, and was received in Edinburgh with popular rejoicing. He had much to hear, and many people to see, and, in keeping with the reserved and subtle nature of the man, he would give Throckmorton no decided answer as to the course he intended following. When it was repeated to him in a formal manner that the Queen had appointed him Regent and he was requested to assume that office, he hesitated and said he could give no answer until he had seen his sister. At first the lords were averse to such an interview; but at length they gave way, and on the 15th of August, Moray, accompanied by Morton and Atholl, set out for Lochleven Castle. Throckmorton had implored the earl to comfort his sister, and be favourable to her.

For Mary and Moray alike the meeting could not have been other than painful. But, for the first hour or two the tension was relieved by the presence of Morton and Atholl. Even so, however, Moray was so guarded in his speech, so uncommittal of the course he intended pursuing, that Mary's worst fears were aroused, and she could not refrain from weeping.

And when the two were alone together for a couple of hours before supper Mary was no more

successful in probing her brother's mind. She could not decide whether he would befriend her or not. Perplexed and anxious, she asked him to speak with her again after supper, and the two remained in serious talk all through the evening hours, and until long after midnight. During that protracted interview, Moray, to use Throckmorton's phrase, behaving "rather like a ghostly father than a counsellor," spoke to her without reserve, and in stern tones of all her misdeeds—her illicit intercourse with Bothwell, her criminal participation in the plans for Darnley's murder, her indifference to the pleas of Lennox, her connivance of Bothwell's collusive trial, her consent to her own abduction, her tolerance of the shameless divorce, her defiance of law and morality and religion in taking for her husband a man whose wife was still alive. He spared no detail of the whole sordid story from beginning to end. Mary wept bitterly the while, sometimes interrupting to acknowledge her misdeeds, sometimes to excuse or explain or extenuate. But Moray remained unmoved, and when he left her he bade her seek God's mercy as her chief refuge.

In the morning they met again. For a little the earl continued in his austere manner of the previous night. There were two courses open to her, he said: one which would surely endanger life, and the other be the means of her preservation. If she tried to disturb the peace of the realm and the reign of her son, or attempted to escape, or appealed to the Sovereigns of England or France, or persisted

CALIFORNIA



MARIE STUART.

FROM A SCARCE PRINT DONE AT THE TIME, IN THE COLLECTION OF I. DENT, Esq., M.P.

in her inordinate affection for Bothwell, she would pay the penalty with her life. But if she gave proof of penitence for her former course, and made it apparent that she did abhor the murder of the King and her marriage with Bothwell, and gave earnest that she intended no revenge against the lords, he would do his utmost to preserve her life, and, as much as possible, save her honour. As for her being restored to liberty, it was not in his power to grant such a request, neither for her good to seek it for the present. And, indeed, Moray concluded, in regard to the preservation of her life at all, it did not lay in his power only, for the other lords had a voice in the matter.

Moray had acted his rôle with consummate skill. And the result showed that he had a penetrating understanding of Mary's character. She, as Throckmorton reported, "took him in her arms and kissed him, and showed herself very well satisfied, requiring him in any ways not to refuse the Regency of the realm, but to accept it at her desire." But Moray was too self-controlled to give a speedy consent. There were many reasons, he said, why he should refuse such an arduous task. But Mary rejoined with such earnest supplication that at last he agreed to assume the office for her sake. And then followed "a new fit of weeping, which being appeased, she embraced him very lovingly, kissed him, and sent her blessing unto the Prince her son by him."

A few hours later, when Moray and Morton and Atholl came to take their formal leave, Mary was

calmer, and had recovered her command of appropriate speech.

“ My lords,” she said, “ you have had experience of my severity, and of the end of it ; I pray you also let me find that you have learned by me to make an end of yours, or at least that you can make it final.”

At the very moment when Moray was reporting to Throckmorton the result of his interview with Mary, the English Ambassador had in his possession a letter from Queen Elizabeth in which she charged her representative to “ roundly and sharply ” declare that if the lords kept their Sovereign in prison or touched her life or estate, she would not fail to “ revenge it to the uttermost.” And he had also received a letter from Cecil to the effect that Elizabeth was in a furious temper, and was beginning to devise “ revenge by war ” on the rebel lords.

Throckmorton was in no hurry to disclose the contents of those letters. He saw that if Elizabeth carried out her threats nothing could save Mary Stuart from death. He had come to the conclusion that Moray himself had no intention against his sister’s life, and that as for her supposed friends, the Hamiltons and Argyle and Huntly, they were so powerless, so fickle in their fidelity, that they did not deserve consideration.

A few days, however, before leaving Edinburgh for London, the English Ambassador had another interview with Moray. Once again he asked that he might be allowed to see the Queen, and once more he was informed that the lords could not grant the



JAMES STUART, EARL OF MORAY.

request. Then would they not set her at liberty? That depended upon events. But if Bothwell were apprehended and punished, what would happen to Mary then?

"We cannot," Moray answered, "bargain for the bear's skin before we catch him."

Surely, however, they had some idea of what action they would take in the event of Bothwell's apprehension?

"Her liberty," Moray rejoined, "will depend chiefly on her own behaviour. Marry! to fish so far before the net, and to tell now what shall be done then, neither do I or the lords think convenient to give any determinate answer."

Throckmorton could do no more. His mission had saved Mary's life; that he left her a deposed Queen and a prisoner was no fault of his. He could return to his royal mistress with the satisfaction of knowing that he had achieved the greatest of the objects committed to his charge. To the end, too, he resolutely declined to acknowledge the new dynasty established by the lords. He had refused to attend the coronation of Mary's son, and when, on the eve of his departure, Moray and the other lords led him to a little cabinet on which stood a piece of plate which they asked him to accept as a present from the King, he firmly declined.

"I cannot accept any present," he said, "except from your Sovereign the Queen; but as from the King, whom I take to be Prince, I can receive none, seeing he has attained to that name by injuring the Queen his mother."

And notwithstanding the obvious anger of the lords, and subsequent pleas of Maitland that he would change his mind, Throckmorton persisted in his refusal.

Meanwhile, where was Bothwell? His appeals to his friends from Spynie Castle on the 16th of July were in vain, and he soon realized that he would never be able to raise a force powerful enough to effect Mary's release. Not that he was absolutely devoid of followers, but they were mostly those "broken men" who were too deeply implicated in Darnley's murder to have any choice save that of clinging to their outcast leader. Even among them, however, there were some who expressed a willingness to murder him if by so doing they could win the favour of Queen Elizabeth or the lords.

Towards the end of July he had been able to muster a few ships, in which he sailed away to the north, hoping for a favourable reception in Orkney and Shetland. At Orkney, however, he was denied admission to the castle, and so he shaped his course for Shetland, where he was given a friendly welcome. And it was then, apparently, that he determined to become the admiral of a pirate fleet. When news of his doings and whereabouts reached Edinburgh, the lords decided upon action. Early in August, then, Sir William Kirkcaldy was commissioned to pursue him with four large and well-equipped vessels.

"Albeit I be no good seaman," Kirkcaldy said, "I promise if I may once encounter with him either by sea or land, he shall either carry me with him,

or else I will bring him back dead or quick to Edinburgh."

Neither part of that programme was carried out. And yet Kirkcaldy did encounter Bothwell. He sighted his fleet in Bressay Sound, and at once crowded on all sail in pursuit. But the valiant Kirkcaldy was "no good seaman." The helmsman of his vessel had no knowledge of those treacherous waters, and, thinking he could follow the example of the hindmost pursued ship, he steered unwarily on until he struck full force on a hidden rock over which the better-handled vessel had passed in safety. Barely saved from a watery grave by the other ships of his fleet, Kirkcaldy, a little later, was given another opportunity of redeeming his boast, but, a gale springing up, the more skilful seamanship of Bothwell's crews enabled them to draw rapidly away over the North Sea towards the coast of Norway.

Far less exciting was the tenor of Mary Stuart's life in her island prison at Lochleven. Whether the child of whom she confessed herself pregnant came into the world prematurely and dead, or whether she fulfilled her time and gave birth to a daughter, who, as legend avers, was quietly carried away to France and became a nun there, is a mystery at present insolvable. And there are no reliable data for the proof or disproof of that other story which credits Mary with having borne a son to the young George Douglas of Lochleven. George Douglas certainly has a conspicuous place in the long list of men who succumbed to her fascination.

His name made a frequent appearance in the letters of the period. "The suspicion," noted one scribe, "of the over great familiarity between the Queen and Mr. Douglas, brother to the Laird of Lochleven, increases more and more, and worse spoken of than I may write." He was, another reported, "in fantasy of love with her." And Mary made at least a pretence of returning his affection. For one day when Moray visited her she told her brother she wished to marry, and when he asked whom she desired to wed, she named George Douglas.

Although a prisoner and fallen upon such evil days, Mary Stuart did not lack plentiful suitors for her hand or favours. One of her jailers, none other than the Lord Ruthven, is said to have thrown himself upon his knees at her bedside and offered to secure her freedom if she would love him. And the other candidates included the Earl Morton himself, burdened with an insane wife and much fleshly weakness; the youthful Lord Methuen, a suitor said to have been favoured by Moray; and one of the Hamiltons.

But apart from the fluttering excitements of probable new adventures on the sea of matrimony, there was little to relieve the tedium of Mary's imprisonment. She was supplied with ample material to indulge in that needlework and embroidery of which she was so fond, and, despite the watchfulness of her guardians by night as well as by day, she managed now and then to pen a brief epistle for some friend in the outside world, and get it started on its way either by the enamoured

George Douglas, or by the page lad, Willie Douglas, "Foundling Willie" as he was called, who waited at the table of the master of Lochleven. And for the rest, day succeeded day, and summer waned to autumn and winter, and her outlook varied not save as the seasons lulled the waters of Lochleven into a mirror or broke their surface in foam, or changed from green to purple, or crowned with snow the undulating heights of the Benarty Hill and distant summits of the Lomond mountains.

With the advent of a new spring, however, hope revived. It was not merely that her spirit responded to Nature's release from the thraldom of winter, that the songs of the birds became a message of good cheer, and the bursting buds of the trees and the fresh green of the grass emblems of a bright new life resurrected from seeming death ; but that secret news was borne to her that the hour of deliverance was drawing nigh.

One effort, it is true, did not prove propitious. It was her custom to lie in bed to a late hour of the morning, and one day, when the laundress came over from the mainland, she was imagined to be yet reposing. Instead, she robed herself in the humble clothes of the washerwoman, seized a bundle of soiled linen, and walked to the waiting boat. But the rowers, ere they had gone far from the island, suspected something to be amiss, for when they had crossed before, their passenger had not been so closely veiled. One of them then attempted to draw aside her muffler, and Mary at once put up her hand to prevent him. That was

fatal. Such a white, delicate hand belonged to no washer of clothes. And Mary's appeal that they would row her ashore fell upon heedless ears ; she must return to the castle, but they would not betray her venture.

But the next attempt had another issue. It was the 2nd of May, and late in the evening, at the time when the master of Lochleven Castle sat down to his supper. That was the one hour when the gate of the castle was not strictly watched, but its security was ensured by it being firmly locked, and the key laid upon the master's supper-table. "Foundling Willie" waited upon him as usual, observant of all his wants, and specially watchful to keep his wine-cup well replenished. And when the meal was far in progress the attentive lad, as he handed his master a new dish, deftly dropped a napkin over the key, and in recovering it picked up the key as well.

Mary was waiting for the signal, disguised in the robes of one of her maids. Swiftly slipping out from her apartments she hurried with her deliverer through the castle gate, the "Foundling" having the presence of mind to lock it behind them, and hurl the key out into the lake. A boat was in readiness, and in another moment Mary and Willie were plying its oars with all their strength.

They were just in time. Hardly had they gone a furlong or so ere the key was missed and the whole castle was in a commotion. For the Queen, it was soon discovered, was missing too ; and all that remained for Sir William Douglas and his retainers

was to crowd to the windows and battlements and learn from their dim vision of the fast receding boat that their prisoner had escaped.

And there were other watchers of that tiny craft. For on the shore of the mainland George Douglas and a few companions, prone to the ground, had for hours been gazing with fixed eyes on the castle island. They were rewarded at last. This was no casual boat coming on an errand for the laird. For in the gloaming they had seen the waving of a white veil, the appointed signal that the Queen had verily ended her captivity.

One of the watchers arose and darted swiftly away towards a sheltered valley in the neighbouring hills. There waited the Lord Seton with a band of forty fully armed horsemen.

Hardly had the boat touched the shore and Mary stepped to land, than she found herself in the midst of a rejoicing company of men who saluted her with loyal obeisance and unrestrained emotion. But this was no hour for courtly ceremony: they were few in number and other friends were far distant. To horse, then, to horse! and away through the night! For once more, after ten and a half weary months, Mary Stuart was free.

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE

MARY STUART was free, but what of Bothwell? How had he fared since that August day when a south-west gale rescued him from the clutches of Kirkcaldy and drove him over the North Sea to the coast of Norway?

Fortune favoured him for a while. When he made land once more at Karm Island, he fell in with another vessel, the master of which undertook to pilot his two ships safely into Karm Sound. Hardly, however, had Bothwell found an anchorage than the Danish war-ship *Björnen*, under Captain Aalborg, sailed into the Sound and cast anchor close to the Scottish vessels. This was the beginning of Bothwell's mischance. For when Captain Aalborg demanded the papers of the Scottish ships, and learned that they had neither "passport, sea-brief, safe-conduct, or commissions which honest seafaring people commonly use," he resolved to convoy them to Bergen. But inasmuch as Bothwell's crews outnumbered the *Björnen* sailors, Captain Aalborg had to resort to strategy. Under various pretences, then, he contrived to have some of Bothwell's men sent on shore and others lured to his own ships, and when

he had effected that division he announced his intention of proceeding to Bergen, where he arrived safely with his prey on the 2nd of September, 1567.

On Captain Aalborg reporting his capture to the commander of the castle, that official, Eric Rosenkrands, summoned a commission of the leading townsmen and held an inquiry on the *Björnen*. It was then that Bothwell explained that he was the husband of the Queen of Scotland, and that the object of his voyage was to pay visits to the Kings of Denmark and France; while as for his lack of passport, of whom should he procure such a document seeing that he was the supreme ruler of his country?

For several weeks Bothwell was allowed a certain amount of freedom and to reside at a hostelry in the town, Rosenkrands often entertaining him at the castle as a distinguished guest. But his misfortune was not at an end. Hardly had one of his captains been identified as one who had captured and robbed a ship of Bergen, and placed in prison, than a lady named Anne Throndsson hailed Bothwell before the town court and charged him with a breach of promise of marriage! It was an old story, dating back some six years, a story of betrayal and desertion, and so thoroughly substantiated by the letters Anne was able to produce, that Bothwell was glad to hush up the affair by promising the lady an annuity from Scotland and making her an immediate present of one of his ships.

When, however, he made a request for a passport that he might continue his voyage, his application

was politely but firmly refused. For in the meantime another discovery had been made. A request for a letter-case which was in one of his ships led to that receptacle being examined by Rosenkrands, and the documents were found to include several proclamations for Bothwell's arrest as the murderer of Darnley and a letter from the Queen of Scotland bemoaning his and her sad fate. That revelation decided the Governor of Bergen to send Bothwell to Copenhagen, and thither he was conveyed at the end of September and handed over to Peter Oxe, the High Steward of Frederick II.

Now Peter Oxe was in possession of information as to what had really happened in Scotland during the preceding few months, and he deemed it advisable to extend to Bothwell the more or less compulsory hospitality of Copenhagen Castle. Realizing now that his situation was becoming serious, Bothwell addressed letters to the Kings of France and Denmark, explaining how the Queen of Scotland had become the victim of a conspiracy, and asking their assistance to rescue her from captivity, etc. One result was that the King of Denmark instructed his High Steward to detain "the Scottish King" in the castle until his arrival. This entirely agreed with the views of Peter Oxe, who, however, was in favour of immuring his unexpected guest in a stronger and more remote fortress than that of Copenhagen.

A little later, however—that is, about the middle of December—there arrived at Copenhagen a messenger from Moray asking for the delivery of Bothwell into his hands. But all the satisfaction he secured was

the offer of permission to prosecute the earl in Denmark for his alleged crimes and a promise that in the meantime he should be prevented from escaping. The fact was that Frederick II. had been favourably impressed with Bothwell's letter, and that feeling was deepened when the earl offered to present him with the islands of Orkney and Shetland in return for his assistance. For the present, however, the Danish King resolved to remove his guest to more secure quarters. Hence his instructions to the commander of Malmoe Castle to the effect that he was to receive the Scottish earl into that fortress. A certain "arched chamber" was to be prepared for his reception, and "if the windows with the iron trellis be not strong and quite secure" the commander was to rectify that before his guest arrived. He was also to "procure him a bed and good maintenance" and above all things to "have strict watch and care of the same earl, in the way you may think best, so that he do not get away."

It was early in January, 1568, that Bothwell was removed to Malmoe Castle and made the acquaintance of that "arched chamber" which was to be his home for many months to come. For to the repeated requests of the Earl of Moray that he would deliver Bothwell into his hands the King of Denmark continued to turn a deaf ear. Nor was Queen Elizabeth more successful. At Moray's request she also asked Frederick II. to send the earl to Scotland that he might be tried for Darnley's murder. One such request from the Queen of

England, promising that no "private violence" should interfere with the justice of his trial, was dispatched from London on the 4th of May, but it fared no better than its predecessors. And so it befell that in those early days of May, 1568, when Mary Stuart was rejoicing in her regained liberty, Bothwell was in the secure keeping of the governor of Malmoe Castle.

Mary's deliverers had laid their plans with care. It had been decided that for the first days of her liberty she would be safest in the Hamilton country, and hence she and her followers rode due south from Lochleven. Their course lay first to the shore of the Firth of Forth, where a boat was waiting; and when the farther strand was reached Lord Claud Hamilton and another party of horsemen joined the rescuers, and together they all continued their hurried ride through the night. Leaving Edinburgh well to the east they dashed on and on, never drawing rein until the massive square tower of Niddry Castle came in sight.

By now the day was well spent, for some twenty miles of land and water had been traversed in the journey from Lochleven. In Niddry Castle, then, one of the homes of Lord Seton, the Queen and her deliverers might safely repose for a few hours ere resuming their flight. Mary, however, at first busied herself with a pen, hurriedly writing a few brief notes to announce her rescue. And then several messengers had to be dispatched. One of the men chosen for those special errands was Hepburn of Riccarton, and to him was committed a dual task.

He was to ride first to Dunbar in the hope that he might be able to secure the castle for the Queen, and then he was to proceed with all haste to Denmark to inform Bothwell of her deliverance.

Only when her letters had been written and her messengers dispatched did Mary, partially unrobing herself, lay down for an hour or two to rest. Through the midnight hours, however, the news of her escape spread rapidly over the country-side, and when the grey light of the dawn touched the castle walls the band of her deliverers was swollen by many zealous recruits. The tramping of horses and the clash of armour broke her repose, and, as when a captive in the Provost's house in Edinburgh, forgetful of her personal appearance, she sprang to her chamber window to greet her new friends and thank them for coming to her aid.

Fully aroused again she felt no more need of repose, and ere the dawn had broken she and her followers vaulted to horse once more and rode off towards the Hamilton country east of Glasgow. It was another journey of more than twenty miles, for her destination was the castle of Draffan, then one of the chief strongholds of the Hamilton family.

Although to-day, as is the case with so many of the buildings associated with the life of Mary Stuart, Draffan Castle is little more than a romantic ruin—best known, perhaps, as the Craignethen prototype of the Tillietudlem of “Old Mortality”—the sturdy walls of its keep and its dominating position on the summit of a lofty bank at a curve of a river, with a deep ravine on the west, are eloquent of its value as

a fortress in the sixteenth century. And in addition the large hall and numerous apartments and spacious courtyard made Draffan Castle an ideal spot for Mary's headquarters pending the assembly of her friends. Here, then, she arrived early in the morning of the 3rd of May, and here she remained for several days.

One of the faithful followers who had waited for her on the shores of Lochleven and had borne her company in her midnight ride, was John Beaton, the brother of the loyal Archbishop of Glasgow, who was still watching her interests at the Court of France, and her first thought on reaching Draffan was to send him on a mission to London and Paris. He was the bearer of three letters—a brief note to Queen Elizabeth, which he was to supplement by verbal details; an epistle to the King of France, imploring his aid to the extent of a thousand arquebusiers; and a longer greeting to the Cardinal of Lorraine. The last letter told how she, Mary Stuart, begged pardon of God and the world for the past errors of her youth, which she promised to amend, returned thanks to the Divine Providence for her delivery, and declared that as she had never swerved in all her afflictions from the Catholic faith so she was now more determined than ever to remain faithful to the Church.

It was during the early days of her freedom, too, that the Queen discussed her situation with two of her legal advisers. What would be the best method, she asked, to secure her restoration to the crown and government? There were two methods—one

by summoning a Parliament, and the other by an appeal to arms. To which Mary rejoined: "By battle let us try it."

But at first she seems to have inclined to more peaceful methods. It so happened that her half-brother, the Earl of Moray, was at that moment in the city of Glasgow, some eleven miles distant. In the fulfilment of his duties as Regent, as he conceived them, he was journeying from place to place to superintend in person the holding of the courts of justice, and at the time of the Queen's escape he had been so engaged for several days in the chief city by the Clyde, having with him none other than a small band of personal attendants. Had Mary been aware of the paucity of his following, or had her captains possessed a little dash and daring, it would have been an easy task to have captured the Regent and held him as a hostage. Instead of taking that heroic course, she dispatched a solitary messenger to inform him that as she was now delivered out of captivity, and had no intention of abiding by the abdication which she had been forced to sign, she requested to be quietly restored to her estate and dignity, promising, in that event, to grant full pardon for all that had been done during her imprisonment.

Moray, instead of committing himself to a definite reply to this offer, responded with a messenger of his own. He was instructed to report to the Queen the purport of the offer which had been made in her name, and to ask whether the same had been made by her consent and authority. Of course Moray's

embassy was nothing more than an adroit scheme to gain a little more time.

For he had not the least intention of either remitting the government or conniving at Mary's restoration to the crown. Undoubtedly her escape had taken him by surprise. He does not seem to have been to the slightest degree in the secret which was shared by Sir William Drury, the Marshal of Berwick. Exactly a month before Mary fled from her prison that English officer had written to Cecil : "The Queen's liberty, by favour, force, or stealth, is shortly looked for." But Drury does not seem to have reported the rumour to Moray, and when the event happened he could not well have been in a worse situation for grappling with it.

On the first arrival of the news such of his Council who happened to be with him in Glasgow expressed themselves in favour of an immediate retreat to Stirling. The castle there was strong, well equipped with men and arms and cannon, and held by the loyal Earl of Mar. It would be wisest to resort there without delay and then summon the lords and their retainers in the name of the King. Besides, the infant King was at Stirling, and it would be good policy to make sure of his person.

Moray, however, would not listen to such advice. He pointed out that a retreat on Stirling would be interpreted as a sign of weakness, and would cause many waverers to go over to the Queen. He would stay where he was, send out immediate messages for assistance, and in the meantime issue a proclamation to the country at large.



MARY, ABOUT 1559—1560.

THE PROPERTY OF THE EARL OF LEVEN AND MELVILLE.



On the 3rd of May, then, the very day when Mary reached Draffan, by five o'clock in the afternoon a proclamation was hurriedly drafted and dispatched hither and thither by special messengers. There was nothing of a timorous or hesitating character about that document. It briefly recalled the fact that the mother of the King had been imprisoned in Lochleven for such cause as was "notorious and manifest," announced that she had escaped, and that various persons were resorting to her for the purpose of troubling the peace of the commonwealth, and called upon earls, lords, barons, gentlemen, and yeomen, to assemble themselves in warlike array and hasten to the Lord Regent at Glasgow, "with all diligence possible." And four days later another proclamation was sent to the chief towns warning the lieges that if they aided the Queen in any way they should have the "ancient laws and pains" of the realm executed upon them.

Moray, indeed, kept a stout heart. In the midst of his warlike preparations he received a message of good wishes from a friend, to which he replied at once. The Queen had escaped, as his friend had heard, but he had no doubt about the enterprise resulting in a "happy and comfortable end," for he had the support of all those lords and others who had taken part in the matter from the beginning.

One of his chief difficulties, however, he did not mention to his well-wisher. In the early days of their rebellion the lords, it will be remembered, had but a scantily furnished exchequer; and now Moray, unexpectedly called upon to raise an army, realized

that even loyalty to the King had a price in the market. The rank and file, at any rate, were unwilling to offer themselves for probable slaughter unless they were paid for the risk, and even the Regent of Scotland was not in the habit of carrying round with him sufficient ready money to meet such demands. So far away as Berwick, Sir William Drury learned that lack of cash was Moray's chief problem, for the "soldiers use importunation, with declaration that if they be not paid they stand doubtful what to do."

Now, Moray's escape from this difficulty is usually placed to the credit of Earl Morton, who was able to supply the Regent with four thousand marks in ready money. But it should be added, as evidence that Morton was not lacking in Scottish caution, that he was handed full security for his loan in the shape of silver vessels weighing more than ninety pounds. Nor was Morton the only one who came to Moray's assistance at this crisis. There was James Douglas, the Laird of Drumlanrig, who advanced the useful sum of three hundred pounds on security of silver plate weighing upwards of twelve pounds. Perhaps there were others; but the loans of these two are perpetuated by the inventories and receipts which still exist.

And among the documents which have survived from those far-off years is another which shows how Moray's wife did her best to aid her husband at that juncture. It is a letter which she wrote to the Earl of Huntly, who, she heard, had joined the forces of the Queen. He had made great diligence, she

understood, to associate himself with those who had taken arms against the King and his Regent. Had he forgotten the faith he had promised the Regent, and that he had vowed that neither life nor death should make him break his word? She had imagined that he was one who "feared God," and had known in his own experience what it was to work against the Divine purpose, as she had often heard him confess. "And now, my lord," the countess continued in her serious way, "I pray call this to mind, that all your enterprises may be well grounded, and have greater respect to the glory of your God, the welfare of your native King, and the commonweal of the country." She hoped he would see the right from the wrong, and choose the best.

One way and another, then, Moray's preparations prospered apace. The Earl of Mar dispatched half a dozen field-cannon from Stirling with a goodly company of soldiers; Kirkcaldy hastily victualled the castle of Edinburgh, placed a reliable captain in charge, and hurried to Glasgow with five hundred soldiers; and the Lord Home, having foiled Hepburn of Riccarton in his attempt on Dunbar, was speedily on his way with six hundred of his retainers. And the proclamations in the King's name were, it was reported, "well obeyed."

But, in the meanwhile, Mary and her friends had not been idle. One of the first essential matters, it had been decided, was the preparation of a document announcing the Queen's revocation of her Lochleven abdication. To whom was committed the task of preparing that revocation does not

appear; it has been presumed that the Very Reverend Archbishop of St. Andrews had a large share in its composition; but there is equally good reason to suppose that Mary herself lent her pen to the framing of some of its phrases.

Among all the records of the time, whether they were proclamations or Acts of Parliament, or bonds or personal letters, there are none which can compete with that revocation for vulgar abuse and coarse vituperation. One of its chief purposes was to smother with objuration all those members of the lords' party who shared in the events of Carberry Hill and subsequent proceedings, and none of them were forgotten from the lowliest to the highest. Lord Robert Stuart was stigmatized as "the author of lies"; Maitland as a "miscreant, unworthy traitor"; Sir James Balfour as an "ungrateful traitor" and "false-swearer heathen"; while the Earl of Moray was a "spurious bastard," "our bastard brother," a "bastard traitor," a "beastly traitor," and a "bastard begotten in shameful adultery." Others of the band were "coward traitors," "double flattering traitors," "feeble tyrants," "shameless butchers," "hell hounds," "bloody tyrants," "godless traitors," "common murderers and throat-cutters," "heirs to Judas, sons of Satan, and of the progeny of cruel Cain," "crafty prurient foxes," and "tigers and venomous serpents."

So furious was the passionate anger of the mood in which the revocation was prepared that no care was taken to preserve the consistency of one part with another. Thus in the exordium it was affirmed

that the Queen had "all" the inhabitants and subjects of her realm "under perfect obedience," but later in the document, when the names and iniquities of countless traitors had been duly tabulated, it asked whether such a horde were not sufficient, not only to "subject the estate of this small kingdom, but also an whole empire"? The prospect led the writer to wonder "how long" the Divine power would suffer such enormities to continue, forgetful of the "perfect obedience" of a previous sentence.

But perhaps the most significant thing about the revocation is the evidence it affords that it was prepared under the dominating influence of the Hamilton faction. There is a marked allusion to the Duke of Châtelherault as the Queen's "dearest father adoptive," as though she had already consented to marry one of his sons, while various members of the Hamilton family are the subject of affectionate references. Besides, in the event of any Regency being necessary for the kingdom owing to the absence of the Queen or other causes, such vicarious government was to be committed to her "dearest father adoptive" and his sons. In short, Mary was for the time being in the hands of the Hamilton party, and had to frame her revocation accordingly.

In addition to that virulent document, which absolutely revoked the abdication signed in Lochleven, and was to have the force of an Act of Parliament, Mary also set her hand to a proclamation which was to be carried at once to the market-crosses of the chief towns, and read aloud in her name.

That document charged all her subjects to dis-

regard the “pretended authority” of the Regent, and promised that if they resorted to her before the 15th of May and declared their penitence and their intention of future obedience she would extend to them her “clemency and mercy.” One valiant herald attempted to read a copy of this proclamation in the streets of Glasgow, but he was promptly arrested and clapped in irons, while in other towns the lieges were so little respectful to the Queen’s commands that they snatched the proclamation from the herald’s hand and tore it into fragments.

Although Mary does not appear to have had in her retinue any serious-minded woman such as the Countess of Moray anxious to assist her cause by penning an epistle like that which the wife of the Regent addressed to Huntly, she did not lack for scribes of another kind. There were urgent private messages to be written to lairds and others, and two or three samples which have survived show that they were practically copies of one model.

“Trusty friend,” they ran, “we greet you well. We doubt not but you know that God of His goodness has put us at liberty, whom we thank most heartily. Wherefore we desire you with all possible diligence, fail not to be here with us in Hamilton, with all your folks, friends, and servants, armed in fear of war, as you will do us acceptable service and pleasure. Because we know your constancy we need not at this present to make longer letter, but will bid you farewell.”

Such were Mary’s calls to arms—brief, pointed, and urgent. Some of them specified the day and

the hour for the arrival of the addressee: "On Saturday next, by eight hours aforenoon, or sooner if ye may"; but they were all alike in their appeal that the recipient of the letter would hasten to her side and bring with him all his friends and servants "boden in fear of war."

And, although her proclamation fared so ill in some of the towns, Mary's appeals and the exertions of her friends produced a remarkable result; for within the space of a few days there rallied to her standard some six thousand men, and the leaders included nine earls, eighteen lords, and nearly a hundred lairds and landed gentlemen.

Of course they deemed it necessary to subscribe their hands to a bond, even if they had no intention of keeping their vow a moment longer than it served their private interests. The Scottish nobles of those days could not possibly undertake a new enterprise without once more pledging their "honour and fidelity." On the 18th of May, then, the earls and lords and lairds, not forgetting a number of Catholic prelates, duly set their hands to a new bond. It expressed suitable gratitude to the Divine Providence for the Queen's delivery out of the hands of her "disobedient and unnatural subjects," dilated upon the danger Her Majesty had been in of losing her life, expounded the duty of all "true subjects," and committed the subscribers to defend the cause of the Queen with their bodies, lands, goods, friends, and servants to the end of their lives. Nor was that all. Having an uneasy consciousness that they harboured against each other a formidable catalogue

of grudges and feuds, they agreed for the present to refer all "such actions and causes" to the arbitration of their Sovereign Lady, and to abide by her decision until such time as a Parliament could be held. And there was the old protestation that they agreed to all this on their "honour and fidelity."

What was the next step to be? Should Mary, who had now removed to Cadzow Castle—another fortress of the Hamiltons near the town which bore their name—remain where she was to await the arrival of possible reinforcements from France, or should she be conveyed to Dumbarton Castle on the Clyde? The latter stronghold had defied Moray all along, and was still being held by Lord Fleming in the name of the Queen. Its sturdy walls and impregnable position on the north bank of the river made it an ideal fortress for Mary's headquarters during the further gathering of her friends. Huntly, for example, ignoring the serious appeal of the Countess of Moray, had hastened to the Queen, signed the bond, and had now departed northwards to gather his friends. The wisest policy would be for Mary to be lodged in such a secure fastness as Dumbarton Castle pending his return and the assembling of others from various parts of the country. Only the Hamiltons objected. Their desire was for Mary to remain in their own special territory; but they were at last outvoted, and a decision reached in favour of Dumbarton Castle. With an army of six thousand it would be an easy matter to carry the Queen to that refuge in a kind of triumphal procession.

But what of Moray? How had he fared in his preparations? Hardly so successfully as the Queen so far as numbers went. His proclamations, the ready cash loans of Morton and the Laird of Drumlanrig, the reinforcements of Mar and Kirkcaldy and Home, and the volunteers who had answered his call, had resulted in the creation of an army of four thousand men, two thousand fewer than that which had rallied to Mary's standard. But the Regent was not dismayed; he was still confident that the enterprise would result in a "happy and comfortable end."

Meanwhile he was constantly on the alert, and in all his plans for the inevitable conflict he had the invaluable services of the valiant and competent Kirkcaldy. So assured was he, too, of the fighting quality of his men that he had nearly determined to march on Hamilton and force an engagement with the enemy.

Sometime, however, on Wednesday, the 12th of May, probably late in the day, information reached him which altered his plans. Moray had his spies in the Queen's camp, and one of them hurried to him on the day named with the news that Mary was to be taken to Dumbarton Castle. A council had indeed been held that day, at which the lords with the Queen had resolved that it was "expedient" that their "Sovereign Lady's most noble person be surely transferred to Dumbarton with the whole army." There would be no need, then, for Moray to seek the enemy; he could meet him by the way and challenge the march to Dumbarton.

But one problem remained. By which route would Mary's army advance? Two courses were open to it—it could either ford the upper reaches of the Clyde and proceed to Dumbarton on the north side of the river, or it could move in a westerly direction until it reached the south bank of the river, and then effect a crossing to the castle. It certainly would not attempt to cross by the one bridge which spanned the stream on the outskirts of Glasgow itself.

In case a decision should be adopted in favour of the second alternative, the soldierly Kirkcaldy made a careful reconnaissance of the route the enemy would be obliged to take. His examination showed him that the holding of the hill at Langside would oppose a formidable obstacle to the advance of Mary's forces, and that the low stone walls of the cottages and earthen or thorn hedges of the gardens would provide admirable cover for the arquebusiers.

Early in the dawn, then, of Thursday, the 13th of May, the Regent's army was marshalled in the open fields to the south of the city, ready either to give battle with the Queen's army on the north bank of the Clyde, or to make a dash for the heights of Langside.

That dawn, too, had witnessed the start of Mary's army from Hamilton. The general of the forces had not been chosen until the last moment, for Mary's commission giving the supreme command to the Earl of Argyle was actually dated the 13th of May. It was a document of large scope, conferring upon the earl full authority to "treat and do all things concerning Her Highness's affairs touching

defence of Her Highness's person," and giving him the power of life or death over the Queen's "unnatural and disobedient" subjects. It was the Earl of Argyle, then, who decided that the march should be westward, and then along the south bank of the Clyde to Dumbarton.

But it was not until about eight o'clock that that decision became clear to Moray. He was still waiting in the open fields outside Glasgow when some of his scouts came in with the news that the enemy was keeping to the south side of the river, and marching in the direction of Langside. Then it was time for action. Kirkcaldy immediately commanded his two hundred cavalry to horse, mounted an arquebusier behind each man, and sped for the river and on to Langside. The cannon, too, were hastily placed in carts and dispatched in the same direction. Last of all came the footmen, the bulk of the army, with Moray and Morton and Mar conspicuous among the leaders.

Kirkcaldy and his horsemen were not many minutes in reaching their destination, and in a brief time the arquebusiers were assigned to their positions behind the walls and in the gardens of the village. Then came the cannon, which were deployed in a line across the hill, and supported by the cavalry, and when the main army arrived it was formed in two wings on either side of the guns. Moray's force, then, not only held the Langside Hill, but was also partially thrown across the road along which the enemy would have to pass.

Meanwhile Mary's army had come into view.

And at that juncture, when the two forces were almost within striking distance of each other, the inconstant fate of Mary Stuart once more asserted itself. For the Earl of Argyle, her Commander-in-Chief, was seized with a fit, and became incapable of directing the engagement. Some said he swooned from fear ; others that he was stricken with epilepsy ; the fact remained that at the most crucial moment the Queen's force was deprived of its general.

Not that there were not other leaders as capable and doubtless more courageous. Lord Herries was there in command of the horsemen ; and Lord Seton ; and the captaincy of the arquebusiers was in good keeping. The Hamilton clan was in full force, and the vanguard of two thousand men was led by Lord Claud himself. That same vanguard was in a brave mood ; they alone, they boasted, would defeat the rebels.

Forestalled in the capture of Langside Hill, the Queen's leaders had to be content with the lesser eminence of Clincart, a small mound to the south-east of Moray's position, while Mary and her personal attendants were halted well to the rear on another knoll near Cathcart Castle.

Less than half a mile lay between the two armies, and perhaps not more than half that distance between the cannon of Moray and the cannon of the Queen. It was with those field-pieces the conflict was opened, Moray's ordnance directing its fire towards Clincart Hill, while that of the Queen was concentrated on the village in an attempt to dislodge the right wing of the Regent's army. Inasmuch

as that wing was thrown across the road, the obvious tactic of Mary's leaders was to pierce it at all hazards.

And so it befell that the heaviest stress of the fighting had to be borne by the right wing of Moray's army. Under cover of the artillery, two detachments were sent forward to force a passage through the village—one consisting of the cavalry under Lord Herries, and the other the vanguard under Lord Claud Hamilton. But the movement was swiftly comprehended in the Regent's camp. To check Lord Herries, the Laird of Drumlanrig hastened forward with a body of horsemen, and at the same time two score marksmen were dispatched to harass the advance of the vanguard. For a few minutes the Queen's cavalry had the better of the encounter with the Regent's horse, and the latter began to fall back on the main body; but at that juncture Moray called upon the bowmen of his left wing, and, thus reinforced, the Laird of Drumlanrig was able to recover his lost ground and drive Lord Herries back.

Deprived of the support of the cavalry, the vanguard had a fit opportunity to redeem its boast that it would defeat the rebels single-handed; and for a time Lord Claud Hamilton and his men carried all before them, driving in the marksmen and dashing headlong towards the main force on the right wing. But now the arquebusiers who had been concealed by Kirkcaldy behind the walls and among the thorn hedges of the gardens poured a galling fire into the close ranks of the vanguard, checking

their progress for a moment. They soon rallied, however, and now nothing could prevent them from coming to close grips with the foe. Thus it happened that the spearmen on both sides were soon locked in a fierce struggle. Pressing on each other with their pikes, the points actually became so embedded in the leathern jackets of the combatants that the shafts formed an interlaced platform on which were caught the discharged pistols, the whingers, and stones which had been hurled to and fro by the soldiers behind.

That was the critical moment of the battle. Sorely pressed, the outer ranks of Moray's right wing began to waver ; but that ominous sign did not escape the watchful eye of Kirkcaldy. Shouting to his men that the enemy was beginning to fall back, and bidding them to hold their ground for a moment, he hurried to the left wing for reinforcements ; and returning with men who had hitherto borne no part in the conflict, he caught the Queen's vanguard with a sudden flank movement, and in a few minutes all was over. For Claud Hamilton's men discovered they had to face a new and untired enemy just as they thought the battle was over, and that unexpected demand found them bankrupt of courage. At that moment, too, the hidden marksmen renewed their raking fire. Mary's soldiers could do no more ; weary with their tussle, and thrust at with spears and galled with bullets, they suddenly broke and fled. Back, then, to the main army the vanguard rushed, and in a flash the whole force was in hard retreat.

Mary saw it all from her little knoll scarce a mile away—that gentle eminence where now stands a simple granite stone bearing her monogram and the fatal date of “XIII of May, 1568.” It was almost the anniversary of her wedding-day—two days more and it would be a twelvemonth since she became Bothwell’s bride—and a month hence would complete the circle of the year since her long day’s vigil on Carberry Hill. Certes she thought upon those things; thought, too, upon what they stood for in the cycle of tragedy which had filled the last year and more of her life. Her memory must have been busy with all that had led to this hour—with the death of her love for Darnley and the birth of the new passion that had taken its place, the plotting for his removal, her luring him to Kirk o’ Field, his sudden end, her perplexity to shield her lover from justice, the growing dread of insufferable shame, the collusive divorce, the hasty marriage, the rebellion of the lords, and her long-drawn agony on Carberry Hill. And the ignominy that followed, the coarse yells of the soldiers and the Edinburgh mob, the flaunting banner of the dead Darnley and the praying infant, her night of terror and despair in the Provost’s house, the mockery of her return to Holyrood, and then the weary months in her island prison—these memories had seared her soul too deeply to be soon overlaid.

This May morning, however, fresh with the promise of summer, her anxiety was not, as on Carberry Hill, to decide between a lover and a rebellious people. Bothwell was far away, safely

immured in his castle prison, and none had yet taken his place in her passionate heart. Another fate hung in the balance now. In the one scale was a crown; in the other some unknown dread alternative. A crown, with its shows and power, a crown of proud lineage, the symbol of dominion over life and death, the pledge of a people's obedience and obeisance and love, the circlet of gold which marked its wearer as the anointed Vice-Regent of God on earth; and instead—what? Some spectral shape which now took the image of a nunnery cell or a castle dungeon, and anon the grim outline of a headsman's block.

So with straining vision Mary Stuart watched the grim struggle on the slope of that hill scarce a mile away. She saw Lord Herries and his horsemen dash forward, prevail for a time, and then recoil. She saw the onward sweep of her vanguard, heard the sharp crack of many firearms, caught the gleam of countless spears, held her breath as the two masses of men, her own and Moray's, met in the shock of a pike-length struggle. But her watching was soon ended. Here was no day-long suspense such as had tormented her soul on Carberry Hill. From the first roar of the cannon to that moment when her vanguard broke and fled the clock had measured scarce an hour of time, so swiftly had the Battle of Langside been fought and lost.

In truth the enterprise had resulted in a "happy and comfortable end" for the Earl of Moray. His victory was cheaply won: two or three soldiers

slain, and Lord Home and one or two more severely wounded, were the sum total of his loss ; but of the Queen's army full three hundred fell in the fight and pursuit, and all her cannon and many men of note were captured.

But for Mary Stuart the issue of that conflict was a stunning blow. Defeat had been deemed impossible. With an army so greatly outnumbering that of Moray she had counted upon reaching the secure refuge of Dumbarton long ere noon. Beyond that her thoughts had not stretched, nor her plans been matured.

And now, in less than a hour, her future lay in ruin. The way to Dumbarton was straitly barred ; to retire on Hamilton would invite the attack of Moray's victorious army ; and as for her own shattered followers, they were flying in all directions. Yet a few were left, for Lord Herries had ridden hard to her side, and the Lords Fleming and Livingstone, and George Douglas and "Foundling Willie" were in close attendance. And with this handful of faithful friends she galloped furiously away.

What route she took is unknown, the accounts cannot possibly be harmonized ; all that is certain is that she fled southward in the direction of England, impelled thereto, no doubt, by the thought that she would be safe for a time in Lord Herries' country. But all the records of the time, her own letters included, are at one in the picture they give of her terror and the hardships she had to endure. Her dread lest she should fall again into the hands of the

rebel lords is easily understood ; in their view, she had added treason to her other offences, and her life would have had short shrift had they taken her prisoner. And the haste of her ride, the consuming desire to speed far away from the reach of Moray, accounted for her long hours in the saddle, her sparse food by day, and her scanty shelter by night. There was some exaggeration, no doubt, in her letter to the Cardinal of Lorraine, for she had a lively fancy ; but it aids the imagination in repicturing her precipitate flight from Langside.

“I have suffered injuries, calumnies, captivity, hunger, cold, heat, flying—without knowing whither—four score and twelve miles across the country, without once pausing to alight, and then lay on the hard ground, having only sour milk to drink, and oatmeal to eat, without bread, passing three nights with the owls.”

Hardly three nights, perhaps, for the Battle of Langside was fought in the morning of the 13th, and by the 15th she had reached the shelter of Dundrennan Abbey, close to the shores of the Solway Firth. In that ancient fane, now a solitary ruin mantled in grey-coloured moss, Mary Stuart took counsel with her friends. Whither next ? Should she cross the wide waters to the English shore, or should she sail away to France ? Lord Herries deprecated a speedy decision ; she would be safe in that country for many days to come ; her friends might yet rally in sufficient numbers to reseat her upon her throne ; and in any case it would be a dangerous hazard to seek the aid of Queen Eliza-

beth. But Mary thought otherwise. The dread of recapture by Moray was still strong upon her, and she had not forgotten how her English cousin had sent Throckmorton to her rescue and comforted her with many promises of assistance against her rebels. Yes, she would cross to England, and try her fate there.

To prepare her way Lord Herries was bidden write to one of the English officials on the farther shore, asking whether, if the Queen of Scotland were compelled to take refuge in England, she would be willingly and safely received. And then Mary took the pen herself, and wrote a brief message to her "very dear sister."

Elizabeth, she said, was not ignorant of her misfortunes, but some had happened too recently to have come to her knowledge.

"Those of my subjects," she continued, "whom I have most benefited, and who were under the greatest obligations to me, after having revolted against me, kept me in prison, and treated me with the utmost indignity, have at last entirely driven me from my kingdom, and reduced me to such a condition that, after God, I have no hope in any one but you."

Both letters—her own and Lord Herries'—were dispatched across the Solway some time during the 15th of May. The next day was Sunday, but the holy calm of that day and the peace of the abbey brought no rest to Mary's anxious spirit. She could not wait for the return of her messenger to Elizabeth, nor even for a reply to Lord Herries'

epistle—she must cross the Solway that very day.

In the Sabbath afternoon, then, an open fishing-boat was got ready in one of the creeks near Dundrennan, and in that rude craft Mary Stuart and her little band set sail for the English shore some twenty miles away. Seven years, save three months, had fled since she had landed on the shores of her native land, but not in seven or any more years would she return again.

EPILOGUE

I

ON that August morning, nearly seven years ago, when Mary Stuart reached the shores of her native land, the vessel which bore her announced her return by a royal salute of cannon ; but on that May Sabbath evening of her first visit to English soil the humble fishing-boat on which she crossed the Solway came quietly to its moorings at the little seaport of Workington. For that night she was accorded the hospitality of Workington Hall, and it was from that mansion, on the following day, she dispatched a long letter to Queen Elizabeth.

Once more she gave a history of all her troubles from the time of her marriage with Darnley to her imprisonment in Lochleven and the catastrophe at Langside, and then told how she had escaped and was now arrived in England for “the safety of my life.” She had confidence that Elizabeth would aid and assist her in her “just quarrel,” and announced her intention of soliciting the help of other Princes. But her immediate necessities were great.

“I entreat you,” she ended, “to send to fetch me as soon as you possibly can, for I am in a pitiable condition, not only for a Queen, but for a gentle-

woman ; for I have nothing in the world but what I had on my person when I made my escape, travelling sixty miles across the country the first day, and not having since even ventured to proceed except in the night, as I hope to declare before you if it please you to have pity, as I trust you will, upon my extreme misfortune."

Later in the day she set out towards Carlisle, the castle of which was in charge of Lord Scrope, as Warden of the West Marches, but she halted for the night at Cockermouth, where Sir Richard Lowther, the Deputy-Warden, waited upon her. Under his escort on the following day she was conducted to Carlisle and lodged in the castle. Her attire was "very mean," Lowther reported, and as her "treasure did not much surmount the furniture of her robes" the Deputy-Warden himself paid such expenses as she had incurred on her journey, and provided horses to convey herself and train. Pending the arrival of instructions from Queen Elizabeth, Lowther added in his letter to London, he intended to keep the Scottish Queen in the castle at Carlisle.

His resolve was speedily put to the test. News of Mary Stuart's arrival in England quickly spread through the country-side, and one of the first to become acquainted with the fact was Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland, a noble of pronounced Catholic convictions. He felt that, as the leading peer of the district, he had the most right to the custody of the Scottish Queen, and immediately set off to Carlisle to enforce his claim. On reaching the castle he stoutly demanded the delivery of her

person, but Lowther as firmly refused, telling Northumberland that he had already charged himself with her safe custody. Such presumption was well calculated to arouse the fiery anger of a Percy, and the earl hotly exclaimed that the Deputy-Warden was "too poor and mean a man" to be worthy of such a charge. Lowther, however, was master in the castle of Carlisle, and the enraged earl was obliged to return home as empty-handed as he came. And a day or two later he received a sharp note from Court forbidding him to "meddle with the removing of the Queen of Scots."

Thus, almost from the first hour of her arrival on English soil, Mary Stuart became a cause of dissension. And that dissension had its roots in the fact that she was a royal representative of the old Catholic faith. There were many in the northern parts of England, peers and commoners, whom the reformed religion had not touched. Despite the fact that Queen Elizabeth had set another example, they retained their ancient allegiance to Rome; and those sturdy Catholics naturally regarded Mary Stuart with more favour than their own Sovereign.

In the Border country, then, there was unfeigned rejoicing over Mary's escape and arrival in England. Letter after letter found its way to Cecil in London telling how the news had given intense pleasure to all adherents of the old faith, and how the gentlemen who had resorted to her little Court at Carlisle were deeply impressed with her "daily defences and excuses of her innocence." They found her to be "wise, virtuous, eloquent, and, according to her

power, liberal, which, with her behaviour, wins the affections of many." No wonder that Mary wrote that she had been "right well received and honourably accompanied and treated." She was in such high spirits, indeed, that she expected to be back in Scotland by the middle of August with "good company."

But it was not to be. There was an obstacle which she had not taken into account when she indulged in that optimistic prophecy. And something of its grim shape must have loomed in her consciousness as soon as she had had two or three interviews with Lord Scrope and Sir Francis Knollys. Those gentlemen had been sent post-haste by Elizabeth to take charge of the fugitive, and they speedily disabused Mary's mind of the idea that she was to be escorted at once to the presence of her English cousin.

On their first arrival Mary received them in her presence chamber, wishing, no doubt, that all her friends should hear how her sister of England had determined to aid her against her rebels; but when she discovered that their message was not so comforting as she had anticipated, she took them into the privacy of her bedroom and wept copious tears as she listened to the conclusion of their story. Her Majesty of England, they said, was inwardly sorry and very much grieved that she could not do Mary the honour of admitting her solemnly and worthily into her presence "by reason of the great slander of murder whereof she was not yet purged."

And so the haunting spectre of Kirk o' Field had

followed her to English soil! She had imagined it laid for ever, that her woes as a prisoner in Lochleven and an exiled Queen would be a sure passport to Elizabeth's favour, that in a month or two she would return to Scotland at the head of an irresistible army, and here again, as forbidding as ever, her path back to her throne was barred by that grim shadow.

Yet she did not wholly despair. Confident in her powers of persuasion, she was convinced that if she could gain Elizabeth's ear she would be able so to tell her story that the battle would be won. In letter after letter, then, and in plea after plea to Sir Francis Knollys, she urged her one persistent request for a personal interview with the English Queen. "Let me come to you without ceremony or in private," she asked, and that supplication recurs again and again in various forms in all her messages to Elizabeth. The matter was one for "us two," both Queens by Divine right, to settle "between ourselves."

"Of my own will," she exclaimed to one of Elizabeth's messengers, "I have offered to make the Queen's Majesty judge of my cause. But how can that be when the Queen, my sister, will not suffer me to come to her? None can compel me to accuse myself, and yet if I would say anything of myself, I would say of myself to her and to none other."

And when Elizabeth proved obdurate, ever retorting that she could not receive her until she was cleared from the suspicion of participation in Darnley's murder, Mary reverted to her second request. She had other friends, she said, in France and elsewhere; if the English Queen would not aid

her, she would at least allow her to seek assistance from other Princes. "Suffer me to go into France," she pleaded, "or at least to Scotland."

But neither to that request would Elizabeth agree. It had been decided by her Council that she could "neither in honour or security" either aid the Scottish Queen to "restitution to her realm, or suffer her to depart, without trial."

Elizabeth, in fact, had assumed the rôle of arbiter between Mary Stuart and her rebel lords. The opportunity to assert the overlordship of the English crown was too excusable to be wasted. Hence Mary and the Earl of Moray were alike given to understand that the dispute between them would have to be submitted to the English Queen and her advisers.

Moray at once agreed on the condition that he was satisfied on one point. In case he and the lords, in justification of their rebellion, proved their charges against their Queen, what would be the result? He was answered that it was not the desire of the Queen of England to condemn the Queen of Scots, but to "make a good end between her and her subjects"; and with that he had to be content.

Mary, however, hesitated. She renewed her old plea for a personal interview with Elizabeth, protested that no one had the right to judge her, and when at last she consented to appoint commissioners to meet Moray and his colleagues before the English representatives it was with the idea that the inquiry would be restricted to such charges as her own commissioners would bring against her rebel lords. In fact, Mary was convinced that the inquiry was to be

a mere formal pretext for her restoration to her throne. Such an impression was industriously circulated in Scotland; it was freely reported that whatever transpired Elizabeth had determined to replace her in her kingdom and government; and this assertion was so generally disseminated that Elizabeth thought it necessary to assure Moray of its falsehood. "If she should be found justly to be guilty," she wrote, "then indeed it should behove us to consider otherwise of her cause than to satisfy her desire for restitution of her to the government of that kingdom."

Early in October the conference met at York, and at the outset the proceedings were hampered by the scanty scope of the commission Mary had given to her representatives, and by their reluctance to take the oath to declare all that they knew to be true in the matter. While the sittings continued at York, in fact, no progress was made beyond an accusation by Mary's commissioners against Moray and the lords for their various acts of rebellion, and a general answer by Moray to the effect that they were justified in all those doings. For the present, however, he withheld his proofs.

Withheld them, that is, from the formal sittings of the conference. But in private Moray allowed the English commissioners to inspect the documents upon which he and the lords founded their accusation that their Queen devised and procured Darnley's murder. The three English commissioners were the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Sussex, and Sir Ralph Sadler, and they all signed their names

to the long letter in which Elizabeth was informed of the nature of the documents which had been privately laid before them.

At last the secret of the casket letters was shared by others than the rebel lords. And the impression Mary's epistles and poetry produced on the Englishmen is sufficiently indicated by their report.

“The said letters and ballads,” they wrote, “do discover such inordinate love between her and Bothwell, her loathing and abhoring of her husband that was murdered, in such sort, as every good and godly man cannot but detest and abhor the same. And these men here do constantly affirm the said letters and other writings which they produce of her own hand to be of her own hand indeed, and do offer to swear and take their oath thereupon; the matter contained in them being such as could hardly be invented or devised by any other than herself, for that they discourse of some things which were unknown to any other than to herself and Bothwell.”

It was for Elizabeth to judge whether such letters as they had described were sufficient proof of Mary's guilt; for themselves, in their opinions and consciences, if the letters were written by Mary, her guilt was “very hard to be avoided.”

Thus the official report to Queen Elizabeth. In a private letter to three of his friends the Duke of Norfolk wrote not less ominously. In his opinion there were but two courses open—either, “if the fact shall be thought as detestable and manifest to you as, for aught we can perceive, it seemeth to us

here," condign punishment in the eyes of the world; or if Her Majesty did not allow of that, "then to make such a composition as in so broken a cause may be." Nor was this the opinion of Norfolk alone. In a personal letter to Cecil the Earl of Sussex wrote: "The matter must, I think, end either by finding her guilty of the crimes of which she is accused, or by some kind of composition with a view of saving her honour."

It was not until the conference was removed to Westminster that Moray was forced to disclose his hand. Elizabeth, it seems, for some motive hard to be determined, had resolved that all the proofs against Mary should be formally produced before her councillors, and at length, in self-defence, Moray was compelled to hand in his indictment. It included a long and detailed history of Mary's relations with Bothwell, the incriminating depositions of several who had been executed for participation in Darnley's murder, and the full text of all the casket letters and poems.

Two whole days were spent by the English Privy Council on the examination of those documents, and with regard to the casket letters special pains were taken to compare them "for the manner of writing and fashion of orthography" with undoubted letters from Mary's pen, with the result that in the collation "no difference was found." And the Privy Councillors adopted a resolution declaring that in view of the "foul matters" disclosed in the letters they had read Queen Elizabeth had just cause to decline to receive the Scottish Queen into her pre-

sence until she had proved her innocence of the charges made against her.

What answer would she make? None. When Moray insisted upon producing his indictment and proofs, Mary's commissioners, acting upon her instructions, lodged an indignant protest, and formally declared that they withdrew from the conference. Their mistress, they said, would not answer to such accusations save in the presence of Elizabeth herself. And when Elizabeth offered to receive her answer either in writing, or by a nobleman appointed either by herself or Mary, she still persisted in her refusal. Elizabeth wrote again and again, earnestly charging her not to forbear from answering, but Mary was obdurate.

"I am sure," she said in a confident tone to Sir Francis Knollys, "the Queen will not condemn me hearing only my adversaries and not me."

"Yes," Knollys answered, "she will condemn you if you condemn yourself by not answering."

And that, in effect, was what really happened. For, pending an opportunity to make a "full determination of the cause" owing to Mary's silence, Moray was at length formally told that nothing had been adduced against him and the lords to "impair their honour and allegiance." It was added, however, that nothing had been produced against the Queen their Sovereign whereby the Queen of England should conceive any "evil opinion" of her royal cousin! In fact, a verdict of "not guilty" for plaintiff and defendant. But while Moray was dismissed in honour to his Regency in Scotland, care-

fully escorted to the Border by English soldiers, and bearing with him a loan of five thousand pounds from Elizabeth herself, Mary Stuart was detained as a prisoner in an English castle.

II

Before Moray had reached Edinburgh again to take up his duties as the Regent of the infant King, Mary Stuart had begun her journey to the third of those numerous castles in which she was to spend the remaining years of her life. From Carlisle she had been removed to Bolton Castle, a seat of Lord Scrope in a wild Yorkshire dale, and thence, early in February, 1569, she was transferred to Tutbury Castle, a Staffordshire fortress belonging to her new keeper, the Earl of Shrewsbury. And it was at Tutbury, on a late November day of 1569, that Shrewsbury received this urgent message from Queen Elizabeth.

“ Prepare yourself with all the force you can possibly make to convey the Scottish Queen from Tutbury unto Coventry, and there see her safely guarded until we shall signify our further pleasure.”

Shrewsbury was not surprised to receive such a command. For several days, indeed, he had been in a state of alarm. He had increased his force by a hundred armed and armoured men, had posted scouts on horseback in a circuit round the castle, had scoured the country six miles round to learn what additional fighters he could call upon in case of need, was entrenching and strengthening the

weak places of the castle, and, above all, notwithstanding that the Scottish Queen was complaining of sickness and kept her bed, was looking to her as surely as though she were in health and “practised nothing else but for her escape.”

And all this perturbation and warlike preparation was caused by the fact that the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland, the Catholic leaders of the North, had raised the standard of rebellion. And those nobles had been prompted to such a daring course by another of Mary Stuart's matrimonial adventures.

During the conference at York and Westminster, Maitland, who had accompanied the Earl of Moray, set on foot a little scheme of his own which would, he pretended, bring the inquiry to a happy issue and cement friendship between England and Scotland. The scheme was to arrange a marriage between Mary Stuart and the Duke of Norfolk. Mary, of course, was already in possession of a husband in the person of Bothwell, but such a trifling impediment could be soon removed; Norfolk, however, was a widower, a threefold widower as a matter of fact, but Maitland seems to have rightly divined that he would be as willing to adventure on a fourth wife as Mary to try her fortune with a fourth husband. He had many points in his favour: he was the only English duke, possessed large estates and wealth, could command a considerable following among the nobility, and if he were religiously a Protestant he was politically a Catholic. For the sake of restoration to her throne

Mary would doubtless have been contented with a far less desirable suitor.

In due course, then, the matter was suitably arranged, and as a part of the plan it would appear that the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland committed themselves to support Norfolk with an armed force should that be necessary. But before all the arrangements could be completed, news of the contemplated wedding reached Elizabeth's ears, and she immediately summoned the bridegroom-elect to Court. That message so alarmed Norfolk that he left London in haste and wrote to Northumberland to postpone the rising. Sharp letters from Elizabeth speedily followed the fugitive duke; he was to repair to her "without delay"; if he were ill, as he affirmed, he must travel "in a litter rather than delay further." And when he obeyed he was promptly consigned to the Tower, there to remain until the August of the following year, 1571.

During the interval—an interval which had witnessed the abortive rising of the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland, and which had issue finally in the execution of the former and the life-long exile of the latter—the Duke of Norfolk had duly confessed the error of his ways, made his humble submission to Elizabeth, and bound himself under his hand and seal "never to deal in that cause of marriage of the Queen of Scots, nor in any other cause belonging to her" save as his own Queen commanded.

About a year later, however, the weak-minded

Norfolk was in the toils again. By the scheming of Mary's subtle Ambassador, John Lesly, Bishop of Ross, he was gradually implicated in the Ridolfi conspiracy, which had for its objects the liberation of Mary, her marriage with Norfolk, the restoration of the Catholic religion, and the overthrow of Queen Elizabeth. There could be only one result to the discovery of such a plot. Norfolk was once more cast into the Tower, and in June, 1572, paid the penalty with his life. Bishop Lesly, caught as an accessory in the plot, told Mary that she ought to regard the discovery as a warning never more to attempt "relief by such means," while to the official who examined him in prison he asserted that the Scottish Queen was not fit for any husband.

"For," he continued, "first she poisoned her husband, the French King; again, she hath consented to the murder of her late husband, Lord Darnley; thirdly, she matched with the murderer and brought him to the field to be murdered; and last of all, she pretended marriage with the duke, with whom she would not long have kept faith, and the duke should not have had the best days with her."

Well might the listener to such an impeachment exclaim: "Lord, what a Queen!"

III

And how fared the cause of Mary Stuart in her native Scotland? In less than a year after his return, the Earl of Moray fell a victim to the hand

of the assassin. It was a Hamilton—James Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh—who fired the fatal shot, thereby earning the gratitude of Mary, who promptly bestowed a pension on the murderer.

Thenceforward for more than two years Scotland was ravaged by civil war, but, save for a few isolated successes, the Queen's party grew ever weaker and weaker, until at last the sole fortress held in Mary's name was the castle of Edinburgh. There Maitland and Sir William Kirkcaldy, both of whom had once more changed sides, made a last valiant effort for the cause of Mary Stuart.

Many were the appeals, friendly and diplomatic, made to those two leaders that they would surrender the castle and own allegiance to the King; but, confident in the strength of the fortress, and convinced that help was on its way from France, and that Elizabeth was too miserly to send her soldiers to the aid of the Regent Morton, they turned a deaf ear to them all. Even the prophetic appeal of John Knox failed. The reformer had now grown old and feeble, and from his sick-bed he sent a messenger to Kirkcaldy.

“Go to yonder man in the castle,” he said, “whom you know I have loved so dearly, and tell him that I have sent you once more to warn him, in the name of God, to leave that evil cause. Neither the crazy rock in which he miserably confides, nor the carnal prudence of that man whom he esteems a demi-god, nor the assistance of strangers shall preserve him; but he shall be disgracefully dragged from his nest to punishment, and hung on a gallows in the face of

the sun, unless he speedily amend his life and flee to the mercy of God."

Kirkcaldy was moved by that stern message—Knox was one of his oldest friends, and he had not lost his esteem for the dauntless reformer. But Maitland only laughed.

"Go tell Mr. Knox," was his scornful answer, "that he is but a drytting prophet."

Maitland had not lost confidence in his own powers—he had emerged triumphantly from many an equally hopeless situation, and he was certain aid was on its way. "The King of France," he wrote, "will not fail to help with men and money in haste, and England dare do nothing. We are able enough to hold their soldiers' doing."

Well would it have been for Maitland had he not written those words—they were reported to Queen Elizabeth, and decided her to send her soldiers and guns to the assistance of Morton in an assault upon Edinburgh Castle.

By the end of April, 1573, an English army and numerous siege-guns, under the command of Sir William Drury, reached the Scottish capital, and on the 25th of that month a final summons to surrender was addressed to Kirkcaldy and Maitland. If they obeyed, their lives should be spared; if they refused, they were not to expect "grace or favour." But the last champions of the cause of Mary Stuart replied that they would keep the castle for Queen Mary until Michaelmas, "although all Scotland and half England had sworn to the contrary."

Nothing remained but to prepare for the siege.

Drury laid his plans with exhaustive care, encircling the castle with batteries on all sides, and preparing for a fierce assault up the one slope which led directly to the fortress. The Castilians contested those ominous preparations as they were best able, but the work went steadily on. Their friends outside shot arrows into the castle now and then with cipher messages depreciating the strength of the besiegers, and assuring them that help was near ; but as day was added to day the encircling batteries grew stronger and stronger, and no relief came. Now and again bands of the defenders showed themselves valiantly on the towers of the castle, and the banner of Mary Stuart still floated proudly over the building.

By the 20th of May, however, all the English cannon were in position, and on the following day they all "spoke together," and spoke such a language that it made them in the castle "think more of God than they did before." Seven days later all was over. The powerful siege-guns made such havoc of towers and walls, and the defenders grew so weary of their task, and so faint for lack of rest and water, that nothing remained but surrender.

And the surrender had to be made without condition—the defenders had forfeited all claim to "grace or favour" by their refusal to obey the last summons. Maitland and Kirkcaldy, then, the last leaders of the cause of Mary Stuart, came from the castle as prisoners of war. Maitland, however, was already a dying man ; for weeks he had been in such feeble health that when the great cannon of the castle were

fired he was carried into a low vault because he could not "abide the shot"; and twelve days after the banner of Mary Stuart had been hauled down from the ramparts of the last fortress held in her name he passed away.

Only Kirkcaldy was left. And for him, the "second Wallace" as he called himself, mercy was earnestly besought. He had joined with Maitland in an appeal to Elizabeth to be allowed to live under her protection in England, never to depart therefrom without Her Majesty's special licence, and no fewer than a hundred landed gentlemen offered themselves in "man rent" to the Regent, besides promising a vast sum of money if his life were spared.

But all was in vain. The preachers were insistent that "God's plague would not cease until the land be purged of blood," and the prophecy of Knox had not been forgotten. So on an August day Kirkcaldy was carried like a common criminal to the market-cross of Edinburgh, and hung on the gallows "in the face of the sun" as Knox had foretold.

So died the last of Mary Stuart's Scottish champions—died protesting with his final breath his unalterable devotion to his captive Queen.

When the Earl of Shrewsbury reported to her the fall of Edinburgh Castle, she said he never told her any good, and begged that for the future he would keep all such news to himself.

"I will," she added, "from henceforth be quiet, and seek by all means to content my health, and give no more ear to any advertisements from Scotland."

A wise resolve, for she knew better than anyone that with the capture of Edinburgh Castle and the passing of the subtle Maitland and the dauntless Kirkcaldy her reign in her native land was for ever ended.

IV

For Bothwell, too, the fall of Edinburgh Castle sounded the knell of hope. While the Earl of Moray lived he was persistent in his efforts to have Mary Stuart's husband brought to justice. In one of his letters to the King of Denmark he dwelt upon the fact that Bothwell had been formally condemned at a meeting of the Scottish Parliament, and suggested that the preferable plan would be for him to be sent to Scotland for punishment. If, however, the King of Denmark was averse to delivering Bothwell to his (Moray's) representative, he trusted that he would not allow that pirate, "condemned alike by Divine and human laws," to escape the penalty he so richly deserved. In other words, the Regent of Scotland gave the King of Denmark full authority to put Bothwell to death.

So many appeals from Scotland and England were made to the King of Denmark that he became perplexed, and in his bewilderment he asked some of his fellow Princes for their advice; but while one of them was in favour of complying with the requests from Scotland, the others declined to commit themselves to any definite opinion.

Frederick II., indeed, was in a difficult position. He did not want to offend either the Queen of

Scotland or the King's party in Bothwell's native land. It was not improbable that Mary Stuart might regain her kingdom, and in that event Bothwell might be willing to fulfil his promise to present Denmark with the Orkney and Shetland Islands. Besides, Bothwell made out so excellent a case for himself that it was difficult to decide whether he were guilty or not. All things considered, the King of Denmark thought it best to reply that he had not been able to come to a decision as to the punishment or delivery of the Earl Bothwell.

For several years, then, Bothwell, although prevented from escaping, enjoyed a considerable amount of liberty, and was even allowed to indulge in little intrigues on his own account. It is obvious, too, that he was permitted to receive visitors in Malmoe Castle; for one such, an Englishman named Peter Adrian, wrote a long letter to Cecil to explain how he had made the earl's acquaintance, and had been his guest for four days in the Malmoe fortress. Bothwell, according to Adrian, marvelled that the Queen of England should keep the Queen of Scotland as captive and prisoner, stoutly asserted his innocence of Darnley's murder, and asked his new friend to carry a letter to the King of France requesting that he (Bothwell) be put in command of sufficient French soldiers to "land at Dumbarton and tread over the bellies of all the Queen's enemies and his own." Nor was he even averse to being sent back to Scotland for trial, for those that meant to "black his face" for that offence were as guilty as he.

Some eight months after Peter Adrian paid his four days' visit to Bothwell in Malmoe Castle—that is, in January, 1571—another Ambassador, Thomas Buchanan by name, was sent from Scotland to request that the earl might be delivered to justice. He reported that Mary Stuart was in frequent communication with Bothwell, whom she desired to be “of good comfort,” and that Bothwell in turn often sent messengers to the captive Queen. Buchanan also wrote that the reason why Bothwell was not delivered was because the authorities in Denmark were informed of “certain divisions in Scotland and England, and are daily awaiting thereon.” The difficulty of Frederick II. was increased by the fact that he was assured that Mary Stuart was also criminal in Darnley's murder, and more, perhaps, than Bothwell himself; for she was “Princess and superior, and the other inferior to serve her commands and lusts.”

Most probably Bothwell would have continued for a long time to enjoy his partial liberty in Malmoe Castle, and the gifts of money and costly clothing which were bestowed upon him by the Danish King, had it not been for the downfall of Edinburgh Castle and the destruction of Mary Stuart's cause in Scotland.

For it is a significant fact that in the month following the capture of the Edinburgh fortress the King of Denmark ordered Bothwell to be removed from Malmoe to a “much worse and closer prison” in the castle of Dragsholm. A little earlier it had been rumoured in Scotland that he was “stark mad,

and had long been so"; but, however that may have been, it is certain that from June, 1573, he was completely shut off from the outer world.

Two years later he was reported to be dead, but further news denied the statement, adding, however, that he was "great swollen." He had still three years to live, for it was not until April in 1578 that death at last set him free. Many terrible stories were told of his latter days, such as that he was put in a "vile and loathsome prison," and that "being overgrown with hair and filth, he went mad and died"; and the evidence that he became insane is too unanimous to allow a doubt in the matter.

Such was the fate of Mary Stuart's copartner in the tragedy of Kirk o' Field. He aspired so high, and fell so low. For a brief month he had shared a royal throne, but Nemesis exacted a terrible price for that glory. And when reason lost its seat, and death mercifully ended his misery, his body was laid in an unnamed coffin and placed in a sombre vault beneath the desolate church of Faareveile. There he sleeps, within sound of the unquiet sea, while the winds and waves moan his requiem.

V

More fortunate than her lover, Mary Stuart's captivity provided her for many years with a regal state far superior to anything she had known in her northern kingdom. Save on those spasmodic occasions when her liberation was the object of an unusually threatening plot, she was allowed a

large amount of freedom to order her life as she wished.

She was an expensive prisoner for Queen Elizabeth, for the household accounts show that the maintenance of herself and attendants and servants involved an annual outlay of more than four thousand pounds. As the English Queen defrayed that charge, Mary was at liberty to use her own private income as she pleased, and devoted a considerable sum to pensions for those who had suffered in her cause.

Although varying in number from time to time, her household never consisted of less than thirty persons ; the average total was about fifty, but once it rose as high as eighty. The lists of names which have survived show that her servants were chiefly of French or Scottish extraction, the latter including the "Foundling Willie," who played so conspicuous a rôle in her escape from Lochleven. Until the last few tragic days she was allowed to include a Catholic priest in her household as her own personal confessor, and no restriction was placed on her religious observances. It is true several of her keepers tried to win her over to the reformed faith ; but their efforts were prompted by personal anxiety for her spiritual welfare and not by official orders.

Wherever she was her chief apartment was used as a royal presence chamber, in which she had her dais and cloth of State and received her followers in courtly style.

As her voluminous correspondence testifies, much of her time was spent in letter-writing, either with

her own pen or by way of dictation to her secretary. She rode much, too, delighting greatly in hunting and hawking and all outdoor pastime. For the quieter hours of the day she found pleasant occupation in tending her pets or in reading or needlework. She usually rose late, but sat up far into the night. "The Queen over-watches them all," wrote one who visited her at Tutbury, "for it is one o'clock every night ere she goes to bed."

That same chronicler confessed the fascination of her personality. "Besides that she is a goodly personage, she hath an alluring grace, a pretty Scottish speech, and a searching wit, clouded with mildness." Nor was he alone in paying tribute to her varied attractions. Still earlier, another victim to her charms, Sir Francis Knollys, had penned his glowing panegyric :

"This lady and Princess is a notable woman ; she seemeth to regard no ceremonious honour beside the acknowledging of her estate regal : she showeth a disposition to speak much, to be bold, to be very pleasant, and to be very familiar. She showeth a great desire to be avenged of her enemies ; she showeth a readiness to expose herself to all perils in hope of victory ; she delighteth much to hear of hardiness and valiancy, commanding by name all approved hardy men of her country, although they be her enemies ; and she concealeth no cowardice even in her friends. The thing that most she thirsteth after is victory, and it seemeth to be indifferent to her to have her enemies diminished either by the sword of her friends, or by the liberal

promises and rewards of her purse, or by division and quarrels raised among themselves: so that for victory's sake pain and peril seem pleasant to her; and in respect of victory, wealth and all things seemeth to her contemptible and vile."

Assuredly a woman likely to inspire romantic devotion in an impressionable young man. And such a youth made his appearance at Sheffield Castle in 1578. His name was Anthony Babington, and for several months he served as page to the Scottish Queen. Thenceforward he was her slave for life.

Hence when, a few years later, he made the acquaintance of several other young Catholics who were admirers of Mary Stuart, Anthony Babington at once became a member of their circle and a ringleader in the plans they gradually matured. In the July of 1586 Babington addressed a long letter to Mary, describing in detail the arrangements which had been made for the murder of Queen Elizabeth and her own rescue from captivity. To that epistle, a few days later, the Scottish Queen returned a long reply.

She was full of admiration for the scheme Babington had in view, and declared her willingness to employ therein her life and all that she had or looked for in this world. And then she asked for further particulars: What forces could they raise? What towns were they sure of? Where was the place of general meeting? What money and armour did they need? And how was she to get forth out of that prison? To those questions Mary added a

number of suggestions, giving three alternative plans for her rescue, and imploring Babington to preserve scrupulous secrecy in all he did.

“Beware,” she wrote, “that none of your messengers that you send forth of the realm carry any letters upon themselves ; but make their dispatches, and send them either after or before them by some others. Take heed of spies and false brethren that are amongst you, especially of some priests, already practised upon by your enemies for your discovery ; and in any case never keep a paper about you that may in any sort do harm.”

And for final exhortation, beneath her signature of “Mary Regina,” she wrote : “Fail not to burn this privately and quickly.”

But before that letter came to Babington’s hand it had been intercepted, opened, and deciphered, and a copy of its contents was soon in the possession of Sir Francis Walsingham, one of the most faithful of Queen Elizabeth’s councillors. Indeed, that “diligent searcher out of hidden secrets” had been following the development of the plot from its inception, hesitating, however, to act until all the incriminating evidence was in his hands.

Swift punishment was meted out to Babington and his fellow-conspirators when once the law was put in motion ; within two weeks of their capture they were tried before a special commission, and six days later they were executed.

Mary Stuart, however, could not be dealt with so summarily. The first necessity was to secure possession of her papers before her suspicions were

aroused. On an August morning, then, Sir Amyas Paulet, her keeper at Chartley Castle, suggested a hunting excursion in the neighbouring park of Tixall, and Mary at once agreed to join the party. She may, indeed, have imagined that she might meet with those rescuers of whom Babington had written, and that hope was probably strengthened when the hunting-party was suddenly accosted by a strong body of horsemen. But hope was soon supplanted by dread. For the leader of the strangers rode forward to Mary, told her that she had been detected in a conspiracy against the life of the Queen of England, and that he had been commanded to convey her to Tixall House under arrest. All her reproaches were in vain, as, too, were her appeals to her servants that they would draw their swords in her defence; she was obliged to go whither her captors desired, and her two secretaries were taken into custody.

For more than two weeks Mary was kept in close confinement at Tixall, and during the interval all her papers at Chartley were seized and sent to London. Her secretaries, too, were rigidly examined and cross-examined, and at length made confessions which deeply implicated their mistress in the Babington conspiracy.

Soon after she was taken back to Chartley Sir Amyas Paulet received orders to dismiss her "unnecessary servants" and take possession of all her money, for it was feared that with the latter she might continue "corrupting underhand some bad members of the State." Paulet obeyed with ruth-

less thoroughness. Summoning a neighbouring gentleman to act as a witness, he entered Mary's bedroom and informed her that he was expressly charged to take her money into his hands. She was naturally indignant, assailed Paulet with many "bitter words," roundly declared that Queen Elizabeth might have her body but her heart she should never have, and firmly refused to deliver up the keys of her cabinet. When, however, Paulet called his servants and ordered them to fetch bars to break open the door, she relented, and allowed it to be unlocked. In that cabinet and elsewhere Paulet discovered five thousand French crowns, a hundred and four pounds, nine hundred pounds, two hundred and fifty-nine pounds, two hundred and eighty pounds, and a gold chain worth at least one hundred pounds. Funds ample, in short, for much "corrupting." With regard to her servants, some were straightway "dispersed," and others were "enclosed in three or four several rooms" and ordered not to leave their chambers on any pretence.

In a postscript to his report of these drastic proceedings, Paulet mentioned that he had received orders to "prepare to remove with all speed." For it had been decided to transfer the Scottish Queen from Chartley to the castle of Fotheringay, a sturdy Norman fortress which was deemed a more suitable building for the captive's approaching examination.

All the documents implicating Mary in the Babington conspiracy had been laid before a special commission of peers and judges, and they unanimously agreed that she ought to be brought to trial. To

Fotheringay, then, the commissioners journeyed, thirty-six in all, and the great chamber of the castle, a spacious apartment measuring some seventy by twenty feet, was duly arranged as a court of justice.

It was early on Wednesday, the 12th of October, that the commissioners reached Fotheringay, but it was not until the morning of Friday, the 14th, that the proceedings began. For at first Mary Stuart resolutely refused to appear before her judges. It was not merely that she vehemently protested her innocence of any design upon Elizabeth's life, nor that she exclaimed with flaming indignation against the wrongs she had suffered during her many years' imprisonment in England, but that she took the old high ground that she was not a mere subject but a born Queen, and answerable to none save God. All through Wednesday and Thursday various members of the commission interviewed her in her private apartment, arguing and persuading her to waive her objections and appear before them in the great hall. At last the patience of the commissioners was exhausted; late on Thursday they told her that on the following morning they would proceed against her whether she were present or absent.

That threat broke down her resolution; on Friday morning she sent word that she would appear. By nine o'clock that morning the commissioners were all assembled in the great hall. At the head of the chamber stood a chair with a cloth of State, symbolical of the fact that the proceedings were taking place by the authority of the Queen of England, and facing it

had been placed a cushioned seat and a floorcloth for the Queen of Scotland. On either side were forms for the legal members of the commission, and to the right and left were baize-covered benches for the earls and barons. Midway down the hall was railed off, and behind that barrier sat a number of gentlemen who had been allowed to witness the trial.

And now all was ready for the entrance of Mary Stuart. And in a few minutes she appeared, passing to the upper portion of the hall through a lane of halberdiers. Richly clad in a gown of black velvet and with a white veil sweeping her shoulders, her train borne by one of her women, she, though walking lamely and leaning for support upon two of her male attendants, bore herself with queenly dignity and grace. For a moment she resented the position which had been assigned to her chair, protesting that her seat should be on the dais, but was pacified when it was placed cornerwise so that she could command a better view of the chief commissioners.

“Alas!” she exclaimed, as her glance wandered round the room, “here are many councillors, and yet there is not one for me.”

After a brief pause the Lord Chancellor arose to open the proceedings in formal manner.

“Madam,” he said, “the Queen being strongly informed of sundry practices made by you against her, hath caused this our meeting. You have read the Queen’s letter certifying the same; and I must say this much unto you from Her Majesty’s mouth, that having borne so many things at your hands, she cannot forbear any longer but proceed against you.”

All through that day and the day following, Mary Stuart confronted her judges alone. She bore herself superbly in every moment of that trying ordeal, parrying with consummate skill the searching questions of the ablest lawyers, denying with unshaken persistence any knowledge of Anthony Babington and his letters to her and hers to him, losing no opportunity to renew her protest that as a born Queen she was answerable to none save God, insinuating that spies had been suborned and documents forged to secure her condemnation, bemoaning the sad fate which had overtaken all who had attempted to befriend her, affirming on her oath that she had never conspired against the life of the English Queen, and at last, with many tears, pleading that she might appear before some other tribunal with counsel by her side.

"My lords," she exclaimed, "when you have done all that you can, yet you shall not obtain your cause for Mary Stuart. I appeal to God first, who is the wise Judge, and to Princes my allies."

Returning to London, the commissioners resumed their inquiry in the Star Chamber, where Mary's two secretaries repeated and emphasized their incriminating confessions. Only one verdict was possible: "Guilty"; only one sentence: "Death." And a few days later the Parliament confirmed both verdict and sentence, and unanimously petitioned Queen Elizabeth to issue the warrant for execution.

On a day in November, then, towards the end of the month, two special messengers were dispatched to Fotheringay. Their errand was to warn Mary

Stuart not to expect mercy, to reproach her with her obstinate attachment to the Catholic faith, and bid her prepare for death.

VI

At last the end had come. But she faced her impending doom with a brave heart. When her keeper, Sir Amyas Paulet, ordered her cloth of State to be removed, for that she was a dead woman and had no right to the honours and dignity of a Queen, she bade her servants hang a crucifix in the vacant place. She heard workmen at some task in the great hall, "erecting the scaffold," she supposed, "whereon I am to perform the last act of this tragedy."

And to the Duke of Guise in France she wrote :

"But praise God, my good cousin ; for, situated as I have been, I was useless to the world in the cause of God and His Church ; but I hope that my death will bear witness of my constancy in the faith, and my readiness to die for the support and restoration of the Catholic Church in this unfortunate island."

To Elizabeth, too, she wrote a farewell letter, thanking her for the "happy tidings" which foreshadowed the end of her "long and weary pilgrimage." She had a few requests to make, but chiefly was she concerned that her cousin would allow her body to be carried to France and buried in "holy ground, with the other Queens of France, my predecessors." She pardoned, she said, all those who had caused her death, but a day of reckoning would come.

“While abandoning this world and preparing myself for a better,” she concluded, “I must remind you that one day you will have to answer for your charge, and for all those whom you doom, and that I desire that my blood and my country may be remembered in that time.”

December was more than half spent when Mary Stuart inscribed her name to those words, and the month wore to its close without any further “happy tidings.” Yuletide passed, indeed, and the New Year came in, and still there was no sign. Another month went by, and February was seven days old when, in the early afternoon, the Earls of Kent and Shrewsbury arrived unexpectedly at Fotheringay and demanded an audience of the Scottish Queen.

Theirs was a solemn errand; in few and grave words they told Mary Stuart that their royal mistress had signed the warrant for her execution, and that on the morrow she must be prepared to die.

Once more the great hall of Fotheringay had to be transformed, and this time into a chamber of death. The scaffold was reared at last for the final “act of this tragedy,” a simple structure of wood twelve feet square and two feet high, with a railing around draped in black cloth. On the scaffold stood a low stool and the headsman’s block, that, too, shrouded in black. There were no other preparations, save that a log fire burnt brightly in the great fireplace.

Much of Tuesday evening Mary Stuart spent in writing her will and making farewell presents to her weeping servants, and then, until past two in the morning, she listened to holy story and prayer until

wearied nature could bear no more. Yet by six she was awake again and busied with her maids on her last toilette. At eight o'clock the summons came, and, attended by half a dozen of her men and women, she passed bravely into the great hall and on to the scaffold.

Once again the warrant for her death was gravely read, Mary listening with "as cheerful a countenance as if it had been a pardon from Her Majesty for her life." Close beside the railing of the scaffold stood Richard Fletcher, Dean of Peterborough, and hardly had the last words of the warrant been read than, addressing the Scottish Queen, he began to implore her to repent her former wickedness and settle her faith only in Jesus Christ. To which she rejoined :

"Mr. Dean, trouble not yourself any more, for I am settled and resolved in my religion, and am purposed therein to die."

For a few moments there was an unseemly wrangle, the Protestant divine persisting in his exhortation and the Catholic Queen in her determination not to listen; but at length the Earls of Kent and Shrewsbury advised him to desist and engage in prayer. And while he prayed, Mary prayed too, telling her beads and kissing her crucifix the while.

When both voices had fallen silent, the executioners proffered their assistance in the disrobing of their victim.

"I was not wont," she said, smiling, "to have my clothes plucked off by such grooms, nor to put off my clothes before such a company."

Her two women, however, soon did all that was necessary, removing her necklace of pomander beads, her rosary, and her upper garments, and binding her eyes with a gold-bordered handkerchief. They could not restrain their sobs.

"Do not cry," Mary said; "remember your promise."

In all that solemn assembly, indeed, she was the most self-possessed and calm. Quietly she allowed herself to be led to the block, and as quietly she knelt by its side. And then one last prayer:

"Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."

And even as she spoke the Earl of Shrewsbury raised his wand as the signal for the executioner. More unnerved than the kneeling Queen, the headsman's first stroke glanced aside, but with a second his fatal task was done, and Mary Stuart had ended her "long and weary pilgrimage."

Slowly the hall emptied of its sobered audience, and then the body was carried to another chamber for embalmment. Directions had been given for its burial at night in the parish church, but that order was countermanded. And there it lay, embalmed and encoffined, in Fotheringay Castle for six long months, for it was not until August that Queen Elizabeth paid her cousin the tardy tribute of an ornate funeral in Peterborough Cathedral.

Garter King-of-Arms and five heralds and forty horsemen were commissioned to escort the body, which was carried in a royal coach covered with black velvet and adorned with the escutcheons of Scotland. None of the trappings of royal ceremony

were omitted. It was late at night—ten o'clock—when the coffin was borne from the castle to the hearse, but the heralds donned their coats-of-arms and uncovered their heads and carried their torches with meticulous attention to regal funeral etiquette. And when the stately cortège reached Peterborough at two o'clock in the morning the body of the Scottish Queen was reverently received at the door of the cathedral by the Bishop and a large company of clergy. Nor was aught omitted from the funeral service that could have emphasized the princely state of the dead Sovereign.

One more regal progress Mary Stuart was to make. Twenty-five years later, her son, now James I. of England, reared her an ornate tomb beneath the fretted vault of Westminster Abbey, and wrote to the Chapter of Peterborough Cathedral for the delivery of the body. "We owe to our dearest mother," he said, "that like honour should be done to her body, and like monument be extant of her, as others—hers and our progenitors—have been used to be done."

On an October day, then, in 1612, the ¹⁶⁷³ ^{corpse} corse of Mary Stuart set out on its last journey, and was laid with all fitting ceremony in a vault beneath the stately chapel of Henry VII. She was in regal company at last, if not among the Queens, her predecessors of France, yet among many proud scions of royal blood. Next to her vault was that of the Lennox family, where had already been laid to rest that Countess Margaret who was the mother of Henry Darnley. And in the chapel above the

resplendent monument of Mary Stuart stands side by side with that on which is a kneeling figure of the victim of Kirk o' Field.

So in their death they were not divided. Nor is it other than meet that as Darnley is sculptured in an attitude of devotion, so Mary Stuart's effigy is that of a suppliant. For her slender hands, so fair and shapely, which had bewitched so many as they hovered over the strings of the lute or wove a pattern in tapestry, are upraised together as though in pleading orison to the eternal Mercy.

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